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"THE LORD WILL IT!"

Preaching of the First Crusade, Peter the Hermit and Pope Urban II.

GRANDMONT

STORIES OF AN OLD MONASTERY

BY

WALTER T. GRIFFIN



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PREFACE.

HOLDING an official position in that part of France correctly called "Le Centre," with the scenes of historic interest greeting the eye on every side, it was only natural that the long hours between office duties should be employed in research. The great Municipal Library of Limoges, so replete with ancient manuscripts, whose treasures have never yet been brought out by the printing press to meet the public eye, the rare old volumes that have been lost sight of in the progress of the centuries, offered too great a temptation to a naturally inquisitive mind to be neglected, especially when his honor the Mayor of Limoges placed these literary relics at the disposition of the writer. The strange and curious tales that are herein related are all founded on what has been read and gleaned from these writings.

The Monastery of Grandmont was chosen because for five centuries it was the most influential agency of both Church and State in this part of France and Europe, and here princes and lords from England, Germany, Italy, and France came to arbitrate their cause and enjoy the privilege of sanctuary. The foundation and rise of such an institution, together with the incidents of life and manners of those distant times, it was hoped would be a subject of interest to the readers of to-day who are fond of looking backward through the mazes already passed in the triumphal march of civilization.

Every character in this book has really existed. That

of Etienne is as nearly a biography as is possible to give. He founded the Monastery of Grandmont, and all the stories told of him have been gathered from his life. Hugues also was a real personage, and his name is prominent in many of the old records of chivalry and monastic life. Each of the other characters has been drawn from what has been given as actual history. The only liberty that has been taken is to ascribe to fictitious persons certain words, actions, and exploits such as were common in those days.

The data from which the scenes are taken is as follows: *Destruction de l'Ordre et de l'Abbaye de Grandmont*, par M. Louis Guibert. *Le Moyen Age et la Renaissance*, 5 vols. *Histoire de Limoges et du Haut et Bas Limousin mise en Harmonie*, par J. A. A. Barney Romanet. *Annales Ordonis Grandmontis*, nunc primum editi et in hanc Epitomem Redacti.

F. Joanne Levesque Trecensi, Prior Villamedrans (1662). *Histoire Politique Civile et Religieuse du Bas-Limousin Depuis les Temps Anciens*, par M. Marvaud. *Limousin Historique*, par H. Arnvul et A. Leymarie. *Histoire du Limousin et de la Bourgeoisie*, par Leymarie. *Description des Monuments des Different Ages Observés dans le Departement de la Haute Vienne*, avec un précis, Rédigée par ordre de le Ministre de l'Interieur, par C. N. Allou, Ingenieur au Corps Royal des Mines. *Annales Manuscriptes de Limoges*, dites Manuscrit de 1638, publies sous les Auspices de la Société Archéologique et Historique du Limousin; par Emile Ruben, Félix Achard, Paul Ducourtreaux, Membres de Cette Société. *Croyances Populaire*, P. L. Jacob. *Curiosités Biographiques*, par Ludovic Lulanne. *Histoire des Croisades*, par M. Michaud. *Recits de l'Histoire du Limousin*, publié par la Société Archéologique et Historique de Limoges.

Special remembrance and thanks are due to the municipality of Limoges for access to the unclassified manuscripts, which were full of interest ; to the librarian of the British Museum, whose kindly help was thankfully received in searching out data ; to the *archiviste* of "La Bibliotheque Nationale," at Paris, whose advice was of great value ; to the present Baron de Mont Brun, and many others who have aided the author to get the necessary information to complete the work now accomplished.

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GRANDMONT;

OR,

STORIES OF AN OLD MONASTERY.

CHAPTER I.

ON THE ROAD TO ROME.

“O MONSIEUR ETIENNE, Monsieur Etienne ! Monsieur le Comte wishes you to go immediately to his room. I have just taken him a big letter that a courier from the Chateau de Clermont brought. I am sure that it contains news about your departure, because, as soon as your father had broken the seal, he sent me to call you.”

It was old Lazarus, a trusted valet of the Comte de Thiers, that had hurried almost breathless into the inner court of the castle, where Etienne de Thiers was talking with his sisters, to tell his young master that he was wanted. The valet seized the young man's hand and kissed it affectionately. The sisters looked frightened and hastened to their mother's side to know the news, while the youth, obedient to his father's summons, went to the little room that looked unlike an office. The walls were hung with swords, crossbows, implements of war and the chase, which delighted the heart of their possessor. Etienne stood respectfully before his father, waiting to hear what he would say.

“Well, my son, the courier brings me word that the

Comte de Clermont starts with his cavalcade to-morrow at sunrise. You are to join him at Ambert in the afternoon. He has a large company, and you will have a very fortunate escort. It is time that you were getting all ready, as you should leave the castle an hour before sunrise in order to meet the comte at the appointed place. I will accompany you until you join your escort."

The speaker was above the average type of knights of the eleventh century. He was of medium height, thick-set, his beard was just beginning to be tinged with gray. Accustomed from his boyhood to athletic sport, he was noted for his great physical strength. His mind was as strong as his body, and what the Comte de Thiers determined should be done was always accomplished. His neighbors respected his will, and his enemies were content to let him alone.

The young man to whom the comte was speaking was his only son Etienne, now in his eighteenth year. The good bishop under whose care he had been placed had informed the father that the young vicomte had made as much progress under his teaching as he was able to give, and, as all the youths of noble families considered their education incomplete until they had visited Rome, the old comte was very anxious for his son to spend some time in that city. When De Thiers heard that his friend and neighbor the Comte de Clermont was about to make the journey, he lost no time in placing his son under the escort of this nobleman.

Etienne was a tall, slender boy, very mild in disposition, of a thoughtful turn of mind, and studious in his habits. The vicomte was almost the opposite of his father, who had no sentiment about him whatsoever, holding books in contempt. He used to say, that "books were good things for monks, priests, and

bishops, but they will never be able to save one's head from the battleax."

His only son was his pride and hope. The comte wanted to see his boy one of the great military leaders of France. He even aspired to have him become Duke of Aquitaine. The Comte of Clermont had no son ; his only child was a daughter, two years younger than Etienne. The union of these two families would mean that the entire dukedom of Aquitaine would be theirs. This was the ambition of both parents.

The Comte de Thiers had always considered his son rather weak physically. He hoped to change his whole nature by sending him to Rome, where Etienne was to be placed under military direction that he might be trained in arms and fitted for a soldier, as became his rank. While the boy had never shown any cowardice and had on occasion exhibited great courage, especially when he rescued his sisters from wolves, the servants having run away leaving the girls exposed to the wild animals, nevertheless the whole tenor of his mind was opposed to military pursuits. He only engaged in the chase to please his father. He would willingly join in running down a wild boar, but when the death stroke was given Etienne would always find an excuse to turn his back ; the sight of blood sickened him. The father hoped that a visit to Rome would work an entire change in him, and that he would return a hardy, pitiless warrior after the ideal of the hard century in which he lived.

There was not much sleep in the Castle of Thiers that night. Everybody was bustling, preparing for the departure of Etienne. Two servants were to accompany the young vicomte to Rome. They were well mounted and armed, and would act as bodyguard to Etienne. Long before daybreak the horns sounded, and the in-

mates assembled to bid the traveler adieu. The comtesse could not keep back the tears, and his sisters kissed him again and again, reminding him of his promise to bring them back some token from Rome. The old comte, already mounted, cried out, "Come, come, no more baby tears ; we must be off !" In a few moments the little troop had crossed the drawbridge and was hastening on the road toward Ambert.

"Etienne, I have a final charge to give thee," said the father, when they were well under way. "Thou art going to the city famous for its heroes, its victories, and its once military grandeur. Remember that we Gauls were conquered by the Romans, not because we were inferior in courage or strength, but because we lacked discipline, skill, and arms. I send thee thither to learn the things that we lacked, that upon thy return thou mayest not only be worthy to be called Comte de Thiers, but also be found great and brave enough to be higher than thy father—even to attain the Duchy of Aquitaine. Remember that thou art to be a warrior; that every prize that the world has to offer is thrown at the soldier's feet ; that he alone is crowned as worthy to rule over his fellows. Have but little regard for books, and pay but slight attention to priests ; it is enough for them to shrive thee at the last moment. The clergy are not able to develop strong men, neither do they make good fighters."

With many such words as these the father used his best endeavors to fire his son with ambition and determination to rise to the height which parental wishes had already pictured for the fond object of affection. Etienne remained silent during the exhortations of his father, and at the close gave as his only answer, "I shall try to prove myself worthy of my noble father."

The sun was already beginning to sink in the west be-

fore the heralds, who were on the outlook, saw in the distance the cloud of dust made by the approaching cavalcade of the Comte de Clermont.

Loud and lusty were the cheers that rang out from the company of Thiers when the looked-for cavalcade was hailed, and right hearty was the response. The two comtes greeted each other with true knightly etiquette, and the rest of the company fell a little behind. After the first salutations were over, Thiers in his bluff way exclaimed:

"I commit to your care the most precious jewel of the castle, and I am certain that in your hands the value will be enhanced."

"I shall look out for him," was the answer. "And it will be necessary for you to make additions to your turrets by the time he returns. I expect that we will be like old dogs in his presence—only able to show our teeth and growl. He will have all the latest arts of war at his finger ends, so that unless he becomes pope he will be a king."

Etienne smiled sadly and silently. But the words of Clermont stirred up the ambition of Comte de Thiers, which was already duly excited, and he replied:

"You have well expressed my thoughts and hopes, only I would sooner see him with a crown upon his head than the tiara. I have just told Etienne that he has the finest prospects before him of any youth in Gaul. With our two houses united he can dictate terms to all Gascony and Burgundy. Thus strengthened, who will be able to stand before his army?"

"That is very possible," cried Clermont; "but I have long regarded with impatience the fact that the head of the Church must be one to whose elevation the German sovereign gives consent. How can we expect great things for France under such conditions? This power

must be brought from the banks of the Danube and Rhine to those of the Rhone and Seine. I am living in hope that Etienne will be the leader whose victorious arms will change the present state of comparative indifference in Gaul to one that will make her, as she should be, the chief power in Europe, so that her voice shall be the one that decides all matters relating to imperial and ecclesiastical affairs."

Many had been the conversations of these two knights over the same subject, and they did not say anything now but what Etienne had heard a hundred times before.

Eight hundred years ago there existed in the French heart as deep a jealousy of the German power as to-day, and the influence that Germany exerted at Rome was such as made all Gaul feel humiliated. Many were the threats made and frequent were the attempts to change the seat of power, but all in vain. The two comtes hoped that by repeating these ideas Etienne would be inspired with their own enthusiasm for the great project that seemed to them and the Gauls in general of the greatest importance.

At Ambert both parties camped for the night after having partaken of a hearty meal. While the fathers talked, Etienne stretched himself upon the ground and was soon enjoying the sleep of youth.

Long before sunrise the trumpet sounded, and the whole company was astir. The Comte de Thiers gave a parting charge to Etienne, the counts saluted one another and parted—one to return home without his heart, which followed the cavalcade to Rome; the other turned his face toward the east. Had anyone been able to penetrate into Etienne's thoughts at this moment, a strange contradiction would have been seen. There was, indeed, a determination, or rather a desire, to accomplish all that

his father's ambition longed for, and to obtain the coveted power that the old comte would like to have won, for the son had no more love for the Germans than his compatriots in the last decade of the nineteenth century have. But the soldier's life, with its coarseness, brutality, and blood, was very repugnant to him. His soul turned toward the Church; but, knowing well his father's opposition to such a life, Etienne determined that he would be a soldier to the best of his ability.

The old Roman road to Rome followed the Rhone for a long distance, then turned to the east and south. As Etienne had never been from home, there was a new charm in every village. Different customs, habits, and dress greeted him. The language of his native Auvergne was changed for a strange jargon that he could not understand. The peasantry wore costumes and head-gear never before seen. Even the fruits and trees were all changed. When they had crossed the Alps and descended into Italy, his admiration was unbounded.

"Look at these fields, my boy," said the Comte de Clermont; "how well adapted they are to cultivation! See these fruits. The people, with their fertile fields, are like ripe pears waiting for a master hand to pluck them. These creatures are so effete they have given themselves over to too great luxury and ease. They could not stand before a solid phalanx of Gauls, but would turn and run like frightened hares. Just have courage, and you will be able to dictate to these sheep who shall be their shepherds."

Many times, especially in descending the mountains, occasions for bravery had presented themselves, and Etienne had shown that he was not wanting in courage. Once, while they were encamped at the foot of the Alps after a severe day's journey, a troop of bandits dashed suddenly upon the camp about midnight, over-

turning several of the guards before the alarm had sounded. They had penetrated into the middle of the camp and were attacking the comte when Etienne, sword in hand, rushed in among the robbers, dealing such heavy, telling blows that the enemy were glad to retreat. This little act of the young vicomte's raised him in the favor of the whole company, and Comte de Clermont dispatched a courier to Thiers describing, in exaggerated terms, Etienne's bravery.

The journey through Italy was rapid, as the roads were good, and within one month from leaving his father's castle the walls of Rome were greeted by his expectant eyes.

If the modern visitor to this ancient capital feels a thrill as the word "Roma" is called out at the railroad station, what must have been the sensations of one who looked upon this city not merely in the light of its ancient greatness, but as the center of art and learning and, above all, of religion, from which went out spiritual teachings for the world. To Etienne the very stones were sacred, and the thousand lessons that the good old bishop, his preceptor, had impressed upon him now swept over his mind and made him almost wish to kneel down to kiss the soil. So many emotions filled his breast that words became too weak vehicles of expression. It is true that young De Thiers thought more of the fathers than of the Cæsars; so he had only half an ear for the comte's tales of Hannibal, Cato, Scipio, and a thousand others whose names are famous in the annals of Rome. The boy kept his thoughts to himself.

The Comte de Clermont at once proceeded to find suitable lodgings for the party during their stay in the city. A fine villa on the slope of the Capitoline was rented; here they established themselves for the pres-

ent. The comte intended to stay two months in Rome ; so he made himself as comfortable as possible. Every day Etienne and he visited some strange and wonderful scene or saw some renowned monument. Now they stood under the Arch of the Candlestick, admiring the carving; again they crossed the Tiber to mark the spot where Horatius held the bridge; climbed the Tarpeian Rock, recalling its history; visited the great Basilicas to gaze upon the relics of a saint; the ruined barracks of the Pretorian Guards attracted their attention another time, the comte relating their story to the young man, showing him how the swords of soldiers had changed emperors. As the couple stood in front of the Coliseum one afternoon, Clermont exclaimed :

“O, Etienne! Had we lived in those days we too might have worn the purple. We would have played no mean part in the affairs of that time.”

After pausing a moment he continued: “Perhaps, after all, it is better to live now. In those olden times poison, the assassin’s knife, and gold played too important a part in affairs. The reward of brave actions is as great at this period as ever. These Germans, though, must be driven out. France should furnish the sovereign, and not the country on the other side of the Rhine.”

Etienne looked upon the vast pile, and his vivid imagination pictured, not the magnificent spectacles of pagan Rome’s military victories, but the agonies and tortures of the Christian martyrs. He was now beholding the place where those intense sufferings had occurred. Within these walls wild beasts had been let loose upon those called Christians. Upon these very stone benches had sat the crowd who applauded as limbs were torn off and martyr blood spilled in the cruel savagery of those distant days. Here the spirits of the men and women that he called saints had been caught up to heaven. Be-

fore his vision passed the real scene—sights of agony and blood, the prayers and shrieks of the victims, the applause of the audience, the mangled remains, the mourning relatives—all this was real to Etienne. He even saw the angels hovering in the air waiting for their souls. His emotional nature was deeply moved; his heart beat rapidly with excitement; his eyes were suffused, but his tongue silent. The old comte looked at the youth and thought that those emotions which were surging in his breast were kindred to those that agitated him; so he was satisfied.

Two busy months had already passed since Clermont and Etienne had arrived in the holy city. Every moment had been crowded with interest and excitement. Important political events had taken place. The comte was on the *qui vive* continually. His visit was brought to a sudden close by the arrival of a courier from his castle. The servant brought a letter saying that Valérie, his only child, the girl to whom Etienne was informally betrothed, had been stricken down with a fever, and that within three days from the date of the attack she had succumbed. The anguish of the father's heart was intense. All his hopes and plans for the future were dashed to the ground in a moment of time.

When the comte handed the fatal message to Etienne, that boy joined his tears with those of his friend. These two young people had become quite attached to one another from being near neighbors. Although the customs of the age forbade their being much in each other's society, still Etienne took it as a matter of course that Valérie was to be his wife, and she had looked forward to greeting him as her husband in deference to the wishes of her parents.

If this news thoroughly upset the hopes of both houses, the effect upon Etienne was certainly no less marked,

and probably this was the decisive event that made him a monk instead of a soldier.

Hasty arrangements were made to place the vicomte under the best military instructors in Rome. He was, however, to be allowed perfect freedom of action and to be master of his time. With a liberal supply of money this young man was left to follow his own will, but it was expected that he should devote the greater part of the day to military pursuits.

When the Comte de Clermont returned to his desolate home in France, he recounted to De Thiers the enthusiasm of Etienne and his delight at being in Rome, also his deep grief at the death of Valérie. He gave the anxious father assurances that his son would be a great honor to him. The two parents mourned the sad fate of Valérie, that so ruthlessly dashed to the ground their high hopes and expectations.

CHAPTER II.

AN ELEVENTH CENTURY EVANGELIST.

ETIENNE, being left to himself, resolved to follow his father's wishes. He gave himself to the study of military tactics and made considerable progress in the practice of arms, but it was very distasteful to his innermost nature. He preferred to linger around the Lateran, to listen to the tales of the priests, to have retold the story of the martyrs, and to picture the apostles walking in the streets or sitting in their prisons. His mind became more and more imbued with these themes. He read carefully all the literature that he could find that treated upon these subjects.

His companions in arms were very jovial fellows. They represented mostly young scions of nobility, who came principally from what is now known as Austria and Germany; there were a few Italians and French. The Italian or Roman military art was greatly overrated at this epoch. The lessons given consisted of swordsmanship and horsemanship, while little detail was devoted to planning campaigns. These brothers in arms were anything but congenial companions to Etienne. He could not enjoy their sensual conversation, and their oaths and impiety filled him with horror. The brutality that he saw manifested, the delight in shedding blood, was perfectly abhorrent to him. He shrank from their presence as one might shiver before a serpent.

Such a state of affairs could not long continue. Insulted beyond all endurance one day, he accepted a

challenge, and, seizing a sword, stepped out to open court where he had been defied and met the insulter. His skillful passes and vigorous strokes soon left him master of the field. But when Etienne saw the blood of his adversary, who was severely wounded, though by no means fatally, he was overcome with remorse and self-reproach. His prompt action had gained him a standing for bravery among his companions, but for himself it was the deciding point of his life. The vicomte resolved that never again would he be the cause of shedding human blood. As he knelt beside the stricken form of his comrade, whose blood he tried to stanch, he registered a vow that if this man lived he would never lift his sword against a fellow-man.

In a few days the wounded soldier was all right again, but Etienne never revoked his vow.

Not long after the duel, while walking down the Corso, Etienne's attention was arrested by the blast of a trumpet sounded by a man dressed in the papal uniform. Led by curiosity, as were hundreds of others, he drew nearer to hear what news this trumpeter had to tell. When the crowd was sufficiently large, the crier with a loud voice said: "Come, listen to the holy monk Paulus! Angels have spoken to him, and at the Lateran at midday he will speak to us of the revelation of God." With a long blast of the trumpet the public crier left for another section of the city.

The disturbed mind of Etienne, looking for peace but finding none, caught upon this chance announcement as something expressly for him. He determined to be a listener. It was two hours before the appointed time; so he wandered up and down the streets that had now become familiar to him, and rested a while in his favorite place for meditation (a nook in the Coliseum), where he mused upon his past life and all that had happened to

him since his departure from Thiers. Consequently he was in a fit frame of mind to be impressed with the impassioned harangue that was awaiting him at the Lateran.

When Etienne started for the Basilica, the crowd was growing larger and larger every moment. Paulus was known to be a hermit monk, who had made his home in the mountains of Calabria. He had retired almost entirely from human society. Seven years before his eloquence had been the talk of Rome, but he had suddenly disappeared, and many strange stories were told to explain the cause. Some said that he had been abducted by the clergy, whose vices he exposed ; others that he had been seized with a malady. Then it was positively asserted that he had been translated as Elijah. It was even reported that a comet, resembling a chariot of fire, had been seen by some monks rising rapidly in the heavens the night after Paulus had preached his last sermon, and that it had carried his body to the skies.

Paulus never gave any account of himself, and turned aside all personal questions with the remark, "Seek to know heavenly things." When this hermit appeared in Rome the second time, it seemed to many that he had risen from the dead, and the interest attached to him was intense. The Lateran was crowded. The pope, with his cardinals, came to assist at the service.

A pale, thin man, slightly above the average height, ascended the pulpit, holding a crucifix in his hand, and, without a word of introduction or even a prayer, called out in a voice shrill and piercing : "Prepare to meet your God ! The day of judgment is at hand ! The archangel is now lifting the great trumpet to his lips to sound the doom of this world ! Jesus is gathering his legions for the world's assize !"

Paulus was quivering with emotion, tears were running in streams down his cheeks, his voice was tremulous, his eyes were like balls of fire, and their glances seemed to penetrate like flashes of lightning. The whole assembly was spellbound.

After a pause of a few seconds, during which his agitation seemed to increase, and almost convulsed with the intensity of his feelings, as if about to declare the most stupendous truth that human ears could listen to, he exclaimed : "Seven nights ago, while waiting for His will, I saw the flames shoot out from the earth. I heard the cries of spirits too deep for our tongues to utter. Then I cried, 'What meaneth this, O God?' The very heavens were hushed, the earth was shaken, and the Almighty spoke. 'Go !' said he. 'Tell those who are at Rome that the end is come ; the torch is lighted to burn up the earth !' "

The monk paused, seemingly to gather all his strength, and shouted, "Repent ! For the end is at hand !"

The effect of this short harangue on the audience was electric. Every soul was more or less affected. Many sank on their knees, expecting the final trump. Even the pope was kneeling. Etienne was perfectly transfixed with wonder and awe.

Paulus preached after this for over two hours, drawing the wildest pictures that a fevered imagination could depict of the judgment of the earth, of the folly of earthly things, and the vanities of the world. The thought that moved the multitude most was the approaching end of the world. Paulus withdrew from Rome that very night, and was never seen again in the city.

The throng dispersed after the service, and for several days nearly everyone who had heard the sermon looked for the end. A slight earthquake shook the city

a few days afterward. This impressed the population greatly, so that the churches were crowded with people. The effect of the sermon upon Etienne was to make him feel convinced that he should turn more completely from the way that his father had planned for him. He went from church to church, hoping to hear something more of Paulus, but all in vain. The only information he could gain of the hermit was that he had been seen hastening across the campagna in the direction of Calabria.

After waiting a long time this poor boy sent a servant to his father's castle with a company that was returning into France, and he started to find the saint (as Paulus was called), to know whether he was on earth or not. What weary days and months he spent wandering southward need not be described. Urged on by the spirit of unrest, the longing for something he knew not what, Etienne went hither and thither. One idea alone led him on, and that was to find Paulus.

Among the volcanic hills that rise upon the southern part of the Italian peninsula Paulus had been wont to dwell, retiring as far as possible from human eyes in his desire to live alone with God. Of the many of whom Etienne inquired where he could find this wonderful man no one could give him the slightest satisfaction. A vacant look, a shake of the head were the only answers to his innumerable questions.

After two years of wandering he came upon a shepherd one morning who had led his goats far beyond the usual haunts. In reply to Etienne's inquiries about Paulus the man told him that he had heard a voice or voices somewhere near. This was good news. The vicomte asked in what direction he had heard the sounds. The shepherd could not exactly tell. So Etienne wandered over every mountain, examined every

hole and cave, and was about giving up the search in despair. He sat down upon a stone to rest, wearied and discouraged. How long Etienne had remained sitting there he never knew; but, waking from his reverie, he saw a white hare quietly running up the mountain.

"I will follow him," said Etienne to himself.

So off he started, trying to keep the animal in sight. This led him through a pathless forest, over peaks and crags, by caverns and lava beds, up the steep side of the mountain. There the hare suddenly disappeared. Reaching the spot where he had seen the animal last, he looked around disappointedly for a moment, when, to his surprise, he beheld a rude cross erected near a cave. His heart beat with expectation as he hastened toward the place. The ground was well worn by human feet, but no other signs of life were visible. Pausing for a few moments, he listened attentively, while his heart beat in great thuds that almost burst his breast. "How dare I disturb him?" Etienne softly asked himself.

The boy stood expectantly awaiting some sign of life, but no sound could be heard. He coughed, thinking to attract attention. He made other noises, shouted, called out the name of Paulus, but received no answer. Finally he ventured to go a little nearer, so that he could see inside the cave. There Etienne beheld a human form lying motionless. A horrible dread began to steal over his heart. Approaching closer he listened, but there was no sound of breathing. The entrance to the cave was so low that one had to stoop to enter; and, as the youth did so, he beheld the wan face of the long-sought Paulus.

Etienne approached the prostrate form and put his hand upon his brow. It was cold. Tears gathered in the vicomte's eyes, and he would willingly have died

there. Looking around the cave, he saw a piece of parchment, on which were written these words :

“To the unknown, whom God shall guide to this hidden cave. I bequeath unto thee this staff, which I bid thee take and go forth to the most isolated spot in thy native country. Live there alone until men shall see by thy good works the power of righteousness and join themselves to thee, so that thou and they shall be a power for good in this evil generation. There live and work until He comes. I further command thee to take the rude cross that has marked my earthly dwelling place for years ; lay it on my breast as I lie here awaiting the resurrection call. I charge thee still to cover up and hide this cave and divulge its place and secret to no human soul. In fulfilling these my last desires, I leave with thee my choicest blessing. Lo, this is writ and signed with the blood of Paulus.”

These words were read and reread until every one of them was burned into the very brain and soul of Etienne. After recovering from the first shock of finding the long-sought man dead, he was also dazed by the testament of Paulus. These feelings gradually, passed away, and one of exultant joy enthused him. To think that he, Etienne de Thiers, was heir of the saintly Paulus !

His first act was to kneel on the place where his master had so often passed hours in prayer and before God to dedicate himself to the work. Then he hastened to carry out the directions about the interment. The cross was brought in and laid upon the breast of the hermit, whose mortal remains were stretched upon the rocky bed that it had known so long while in life. One long look, a silent prayer, and all that was left of Paulus was forever hidden from human eyes. It was but a slight task to roll stones enough to fill up the entrance to this little cave. Fresh earth was also placed over the stones,

and all made as secure as possible. Thus the final abode was effectually concealed. Turning his back then and forever from the spot that could never be erased from his memory, Etienne hastened away, eager to begin the work that had been confided to him. He returned immediately to Rome, for he well knew that it would be necessary for him to obtain the authority of the holy see before he could commence his life work.

That night he journeyed no further than the foot of the mountain, slept in the little village, and started toward Rome the next morning.

CHAPTER III.

FORSAKING ALL THINGS.

OVER a year had passed since he had visited the capital, and he had been so far outside of the current of events that he little realized the change that had taken place in the Roman see. A weak, cringing, subservient creature no longer filled the papal chair, but Hildebrand, the ascetic, the immovable, the monk, now wore the pontifical insignia as Pope Gregory the Seventh. Often had Etienne heard this man's name mentioned, and once or twice had he listened to his words of power; but, now that he was seated where the weak Benedict had reigned disgracefully, Etienne was afraid that he too might become a victim of the hour. Little did he know the man of iron who sat in Peter's seat.

When Etienne reached Rome, the great tumult was beginning. The pope had thundered forth his edicts against the shameless sins of the clergy. In the eyes of Hildebrand nothing seemed half so terrible as a clergy given over to lasciviousness. Etienne was rejoiced at the words that he heard, and the news so often told him impressed him with the belief that the prayers of Paulus were answered, and that Hildebrand was to usher in the millennium. But O, the partisanship that he found at Rome! Never was the enmity so bitter. The deposed ecclesiastics and their friends were seeking in every possible way to end the reign and days of the reformer. Never were such vituperant epithets hurled about. Some of the ablest men of the times, such as the German clergy, were loudly opposed to the sweep-

ing reforms instituted by the new pope, and the Italian priests were hiding under this mantle to cover up their revolting sins. But Hildebrand stood like a rock; bribes, threats, and dazzling promises had no effect upon "the pope with a marble heart." Some endeavored to bring about such a revolt as should destroy him; but still he continued to hurl his anathemas against emperors, princes, nobles, States, whomsoever in his opinion merited them. He was probably the needed tonic, the antidote to the poison of disorder and vice that had crept in under the sacerdotal robe.

Etienne was greeted with delight by some of his former acquaintances, but he carefully shut himself from observation as far as possible. It was found out in some way that he had seen the holy Paulus, and Hildebrand sent for the young man that he might hear from his own lips the story of the renowned hermit. Etienne was ushered into the presence of a sharp-visaged man, rather small in stature, bearing in his face the signs of long fasts and protracted vigils, and having a very monastic mien; the very opposite of the jolly, round-faced good livers who had latterly been on the papal throne.

Hildebrand was engaged in writing when the young man was announced, and for several minutes after he entered continued his work. Looking up suddenly at the youth, he said, "Art thou, my son, the favored one who has enjoyed the privilege of communion with the holy Paulus?" Then, as if speaking to himself, he continued, "Ah, yes; as if it were but yesterday do I remember his tremendous pictures of Christ's second coming. I could almost see the arches of heaven bend, the skies break, and hear the wings of the angelic legions and the command of the great archangel; but tell me, my son, all that thou hast seen and known of this saint."

The words opened Etienne's mouth, and beginning at the very commencement he related all, the keen, piercing eyes of Hildebrand eagerly watching the speaker. Often was he interrupted with adroit questions, aimed not only to find out all about Paulus, but also to draw out the young man and see the character that was behind the frank, open face.

When the story was ended, Hildebrand said, "Truly he was a saint, and may you, my son, be like him."

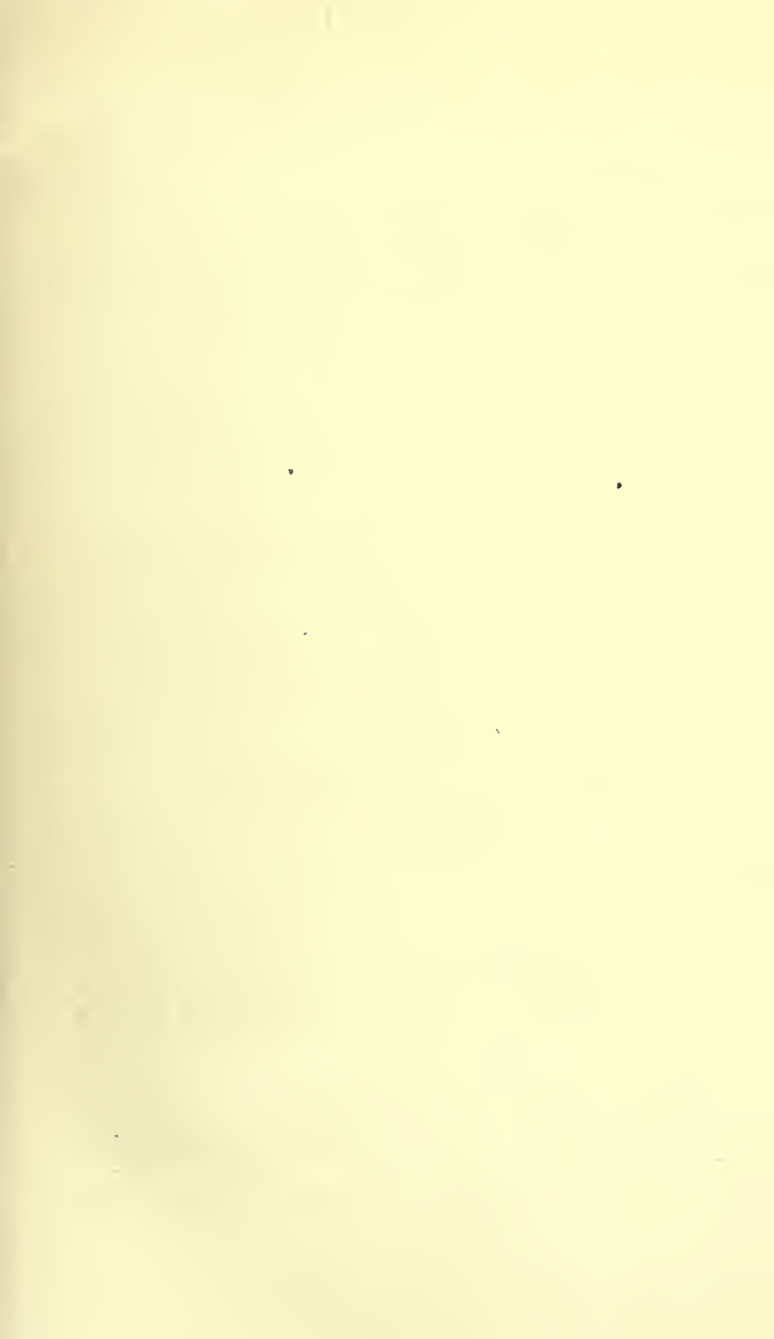
"That is my highest ambition," replied Etienne; "and I have come here to Rome to ask permission of your holiness to go off to the wildest, loneliest, most forsaken regions of my country, that I may there in solitude and prayer fit my soul for God and instill in as many as may come to me the desire to lead a life of prayer and solitude."

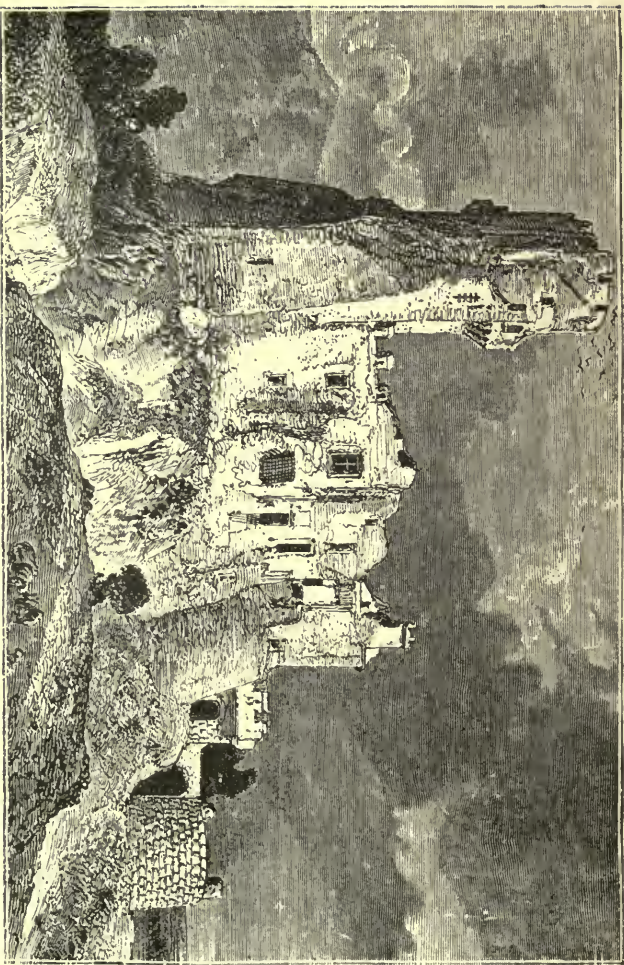
"O, my son! Thou little knowest what thou wilt have to forego. Knowest thou not that the times of ease, indulgence, and laziness, such as have marked the lives of monks of late, are now past; that the man who now enters this holy state must be ready to yield himself to the severest sacrifices, deny himself the comforts of life, and endure that hardness which will indeed make him a good soldier of the cross?"

"I know, and I rejoice at it," cried Etienne. "Make the conditions as hard as thou wilt; take away food altogether if it seems good to thee; I will willingly starve, so that I may the sooner see Paulus and the Lord."

The enthusiasm of the youth pleased the pope. He had no wish to send him off, for he thought that such a man as he would be just the trusty tool for him to work with in Rome; so he answered, "If this is thy true desire, stay for one month in my household and share my diet with me."

Etienne consented. The very coarsest of food was





RUINS OF CASTLE NEAR THIERS.

prepared, the longest vigils were kept, almost incessant prayers were offered, and still the youth throughout the month seemed happy and pleased at the prospect. At the end of the month Hildebrand, thinking that the young man could be of service to the Church in the plan that was before him, drew up a bull with his own hand, in which he spoke of the son of Thiers as one of the most pious and exemplary men of the age. The bull excepted him and his monastery from all ecclesiastical authority except that of the pope himself.

After many prayers and blessings the future monk set out for his old home. He was bound to go to Thiers and ask his parents' blessing before he should take up the monastic life. So, with only his staff, sacred from its association with Paulus, he commenced his journey. Never did a bridegroom look forward to such happiness as that with which this youth anticipated the privations, solitude, and austerity of a monastic life. Living on the herbs gathered by the way, with some fruit that now and then a peasant offered to him, he reached Thiers, his father's castle, after a journey of several weeks. As from a summit he beheld the familiar outline ; as the old playground of himself and his sisters greeted his eye ; as on nearer approach he beheld his mother giving directions to the gardener who was watering some flowers ; as his sisters, grown now to be beautiful young ladies, were seen passing to and fro, the memories of his childhood and youth—his familiarity with all these scenes came with such a rush over his soul that his heart beat furiously, his eyes filled with tears, and unconsciously he hastened his footsteps until the portcullis was reached, the castle entered, and his mother and sisters were hanging on his neck weeping out their joyous welcome. The warm heart of the son and brother was so moved that his tears

joined theirs. O, Etienne, that fair speech that you had framed; that distant greeting that you intended to give your fond relatives, as if to say, "I am yours no longer;" that program you had so carefully arranged—what havoc did your mother's and sisters' kisses play with them all! After all, a human heart requires much to change it into steel.

Old Lazarus, who heard the news of the son's arrival, was sounding the clarion, and all the servants of the household hastened to do their obeisance to the young Count of Thiers. The old count was so proud that, after giving two or three hearty slaps on the back of his son and saying, "Well, I cannot speak much for your retinue," he danced off and ordered the servants to prepare the great dinner of the year. Not much time was allowed; but there was always enough in the count's larders to serve a king, and great haste was made in getting it ready. Etienne's mother said, "Your chamber, my dear son, is as you left it. Go there, wash away the signs of travel, and take a little rest."

How glad was Etienne to retreat even from those loving hearts! In that little chamber, to which he had bidden farewell years before ere he took his journey to Rome, where he had expected to win renown, he now found himself alone once more. What changes since then—in himself most of all! Now his fortune was to consist in nothingness; his one hope to live alone in a quiet company of his fellows, and there wait for God to take them. As he knelt down, the staff of Paulus fell against him, and, interpreting it as a reminder of his vow, he implored forgiveness for his weakness and resolved not to spend one night beneath his father's roof, since he was sure that he could not trust himself. Thrice was he called before he would descend to dinner. He went down a changed man. With those tears

had gone out all tender feelings, and with them departed the warm affection of youth and childhood. With that determined look he had shut his heart to those kindlier sentiments that kindle the fires of sweet affection in the human heart. The bath had been molten steel that made him lose all feeling and become as hard to natural affections as a stone.

Awaiting him as he descended was his mother on one side and elder sister on the other, who were ready each to take an arm and escort him to the seat of honor ; but, holding the cross before his face in both hands, he warned them both away. The father, who was at the table, was calling loudly to all to sit down, as the roast sheep would be ruined, the different dishes would be cold, and the dinner spoiled. He had not seen the young man's act nor noticed the mother's tears. Etienne, who was so accustomed to obey when at the castle, involuntarily took his usual seat, which was now surrounded by flowers plucked by his sisters in honor of his return. Hardly had he seated himself before the huge trenchers were brought in and the meats served and large portions of wine poured out for all. Etienne was too dazed to say anything for a moment. Everything went just opposite to what he expected. But as he touched neither meat nor wine, his father, who had partaken freely of both, paused for a moment to call out : " What ! a Thiers without an appetite ! Eat, my boy." " Here is to the return of the future Count of Thiers ! " cried the nobleman, who had already drained two large cups of wine.

All of the family seized their cups to drink, but still Etienne's remained untasted. He felt his head turning—the steel, would it break ? No. He arose in his place and, taking up his cross, said : " Father—so I call you for the last time. Mother and sisters—so you are,

but will cease to be forever !” Then he repeated his vow to renounce the world, read the bull of the pope, and declared his intention to become a monk and found a monastery.

Long before he finished the mother and sisters were choking with sobs, and the old count, who was accustomed to command rather than obey, cried : “ Hush, hush, boy ! Thy sickness has turned thy head. Drink this wine, and we will talk over the vows to-morrow !” But, no. Then and there Etienne declared his purpose, and insisted on having his plan carried out.

The feast of joy was turned into one of great sadness ; all pleasure was gone. Etienne tasted only of the coarse vegetables that were on the table, and after declaring that he would never be a Count of Thiers, to wear gay garments and seek pleasure, he went forth clad in monkish brown, bareheaded and barefooted, that summer night from his father’s castle, without even a farewell kiss from his mother and sisters—out to that hard, lonely life which he had chosen.

But Etienne was happy. The prayers and tears of his mother and the threats of his father only made him more determined than ever. He left the old home at the midnight hour, not having where to lay his head, feeling as he went an ecstasy of exultation that often comes to one who has accomplished an important and difficult task.

Etienne took a westerly course from his father’s castle, and after wandering about for some time addressed himself to the Bishop of Limoges, and desired to know where the “ wildest, loneliest, most abandoned part of his diocese was in order that he might there found his monastic order.” He was received with distinction, and the bishop pointed him to that rough, uncultivated,

mountainous tract where the snows of winter love to linger, where the storms sweep with their wildest fury, and which is the least inhabitable of all the sterile hills of the Haute-Vienne. Etienne was told that there he would be the farthest from human intercourse, and thither he went, taking with him only the sacred staff of Paulus.

His first home was in a little cave hollowed by his own hands. His strange words and stranger life presented its attractions to many, and not a few men left all and came to join him in his solitude. The rules of his humble monastery were most rigid. For six months of the year no meat was to be eaten; much of the time but one scanty meal was allowed daily; seven times within the twenty-four hours were the brothers to assemble to pray and praise God; the pleasures of intercourse with the world were forbidden, and the monks were to live from day to day on just what the Lord should send; all property was to be held in common, and all that was not necessary for immediate need was to be given to the poor; the whole life was to be spent, as much as possible, in prayer and contemplation. Truly not a very enticing offer for men in general! Yet there were those who were very glad of this opportunity to escape the cares and burdens of the world.

Even such a life as this, austere and self-sacrificing, has its attractions. The mass of men are looking for happiness; they think it must be where they are not; so they are willing to fly anywhere to escape from what they then suffer. But especially at that time the world was impressed with the fact that the end of all things was at hand. Ignorance and superstition ruled the land, and men were carried away by bright pictures of paradise and frightened by vivid descriptions of a material

hell, with endless fire and brimstone. The higher and intellectual part of man's nature was little appealed to, and these strange fancies frequently took complete possession of men, perhaps often the result of a diseased mind, and in almost every case the outcome of erroneous views of man's relation to God.

CHAPTER IV.

A STURDY MONK.

AMONG the most famous of all Etienne's followers in his mountain retreat was Hugues de Lacerta, the lord of the famous castle of Chalus, in the wanton siege of which a century later Richard Cœur de Lion lost his life.

Of all the characters that abounded in the closing decades of the eleventh century one is hardly to be found more unique in all of its make-up than this Hugues. The Lord of Chalus was of gigantic stature, his strength was in proportion to his size, and the renown of his arms was extended all over France. Whoever met him in battle respected him, and well he might, for the vigor with which his right hand could wield a battleax or swing a sword was a marvel to all beholders, as well as a death-dealing power to all his enemies. He bore the name of being a hard, rough, unprincipled man. He counted all his vassals and dependents as so many slaves, and took whatever he wanted. No female in all his domain ever thought of marrying without first consulting him, and the men were like so many whipped curs in his presence. When not engaged in battles, which occupied the greater part of the year, he spent the time in hunting and in wild orgies that would have disgraced a pagan sacrifice. But in answer to all that was said to him he replied, "Have I not a right to do what I will with my own? If anyone says no, let him meet me with the battleax in the open court." This answer effectually silenced all objections.

One day, when a company of monks came to rebuke him for some act of cruelty which he had performed, he took them one by one out into his court and stripped them of their robes and administered corporal punishment in the same way that parents used to do to their children in the good old days. And so he sent them off, telling them to come back when they had learned better manners.

In this rough style he had lived for years; but one day there came along a monk who had been to the Holy Land, and as Hugues always kept an open house and a hospitable table, the monk found it convenient to rest there. At the table he related the strange sights and scenes of that land of Palestine; told of the sacred places, of the pleasure of worshiping where the Son of God himself had lived, preached, bled, and died. He spoke in such a way that Hugues said, "I will go to the Holy Land myself."

Now, when the Lord of Chalus decided to do a thing, everything else had to give way. After leaving the affairs of the castle in the hands of those whom he considered competent parties, Hugues started in company with this monk, with whom he made this contract before starting: "You shall do all the necessary praying, and I will do all the fighting;" for his motto was "Every man to his work," and his work was with the broadsword. The two journeyed along, and the monk, who was a shrewd fellow, saw how to win the better nature of Hugues, and they became fast and inseparable friends. The journey was made mostly on foot, and took a long time. On the way they met other travelers variously bound, and the incidents of travel in those days were passing strange.

It happened one time that they overtook two German monks going the same way, and it was only natural for the ecclesiastics to fall to discussing the questions that

were filling the minds of all Europe; and at the time of Hildebrand the great question was as to whether the pope had a right to interfere in matters of state and unseat kings and emperors, and be, indeed, the active agent of the Most High on earth. The Germans naturally defended the position of their own countrymen, who bitterly opposed what they called the outside interference of anybody in matters of state. The friend of Hugues was a warm partisan of the pope, and defended his cause as well as he could, but he was unable to meet the logic of his opponents. As he was retiring in disgust from the argument, Hugues, who had taken no part in the word-conflict, now stepped forward and seized each German by his robe and shook them very savagely, threatening to dash their brains out on the spot unless they conceded that his friend was in the right. Both acquiesced under the persuasive power of muscle and acknowledged their error. They both were extremely silent after this and answered in monosyllables, always taking good care to keep on the side of the road farthest from Hugues. When the monk, with Hugues, awoke the next morning, their Teutonic friends were missing, as they did not care to again enter into another such argument.

Hugues was incapable of fear; robbers, bandits, and outlaws of every kind who beset the way gave him a free road; even the Mussulman authorities, who now and then came in contact with him, gave in and yielded him privileges unknown to others; all of which he enjoyed with the monk. But still the Frank lord would lead his merry life. The monk did not dare rebuke his escort, and so Hugues had things pretty much his own way. The sacred places did not appeal very strongly to him. He thought much more of the harems than he did of Jerusalem and its memories. He became quite

intimate with some of the authorities, and went out with a sheik on some of his war expeditions, where he conducted himself with such ability that he won the praises of the Saracen leaders, who offered him a high position if he would become a Mohammedan and enter their army. Hugues was stubborn and would not yield. He conceded that the manner of living after the Eastern style pleased him much better than the Christian, but he would wait until his second visit before deciding.

The monk who accompanied Hugues was stricken with fever and died. This deeply impressed his lordship, and finding that a ship was soon to sail from Jaffa to France he embarked, and after a two years' absence reappeared at his castle almost as suddenly as he had left it. He found everything in good order. There was no war going on and nothing that served to break his *ennui*. He learned, shortly after his arrival, of the foundation of the new religious order at Grandmont, and hastened to see Etienne. When he beheld the man whom everybody revered as a saint, and when he observed the lives which his followers led, he was seized with the desire to become a monk. Immediately he applied to Etienne, who with unmistakable surprise said, "O, no; impossible. We cannot receive a man like you. This is a place for only those who intend to lead holy lives. You would not be at home here half a day."

Hugues pleaded most earnestly. It was not for the Lord of Chalus to be refused, and he presented his reasons; but they did not appeal to Etienne, who said: "Go away, go away; it is the devil that seeks to break up our order through you."

"O, holy man! O, holy man!" cried Hugues in anguish. "I will go away, as you have said; but I go to commit all kinds of sin, to lead the most evil life that I can, and I throw all the blame upon you who have de-

nied me an asylum in this refuge. Therefore lose not one moment, but pray unceasingly night and day as long as you live, for you will need all the prayers to pardon all of the sins that I intend to commit in your name for refusing me the refuge of this holy place."

Etienne was struck with horror at this speech. He called to the retreating lord and told him all that he would have to submit to in order to become a brother monk. He pictured in the most austere terms possible the kind of life that he would have to lead and all of the self-denials that he would have to undergo if he entered that monastery, of his having to rise for midnight prayers, of the rule to walk around the cemetery three times a day in order to fulfill the requirements of the order. This he said in order to affright the renowned lord with the tale of long fasts, endless prayers, deprivations, sacrifices, severe hardships, confessions, and all his loneliness and sufferings. But all in vain. Hugues replied, "Were the conditions a hundred times harder, I would gladly accept them."

There was nothing else for Etienne to do but accept him then and there. Not even waiting to make different arrangements for his castle, he immediately upon his bare knees took the irrevocable vows, and then donned the coarse yellowish-brown habit of the order. The attention of the little fraternity was called to the newcomer, and all looked upon him with doubt and suspicion, for it seemed incredible that a man who had led such a wild, savage, and wicked life could settle down and become a plain, simple, obedient monk. Time, that unflinching witness whose unfailing memory brings out whatever is hidden in men, proved that among all the followers of Etienne—and all were noted for their piety, charity, and virtue—not one excelled Hugues de Lacerta, the Lord of Chalus. He

was as speedy in winning a reputation for piety as he had been in arms, and soon the whole region was filled with the change that had taken place. It seemed like a repetition of the miracle of Gadara, when so many devils were cast out of a man.

The life at the monastery received a new impulse from the accession of Hugues. Some strange things happened. For instance, the long fastings and privations of Etienne had so reduced his strength that more nourishment had to be given to him. The Lord of Cocu had placed several cows in an inclosure some little distance from the retreat of Etienne, and had sent word to him that he must see that those cows were milked and that the milk must be used in the monastery. It was this that nourished Etienne. For several mornings and nights, about a month after the advent of Hugues among the brethren, the persons sent to the pasture came back with no milk, saying that the monks from Ambazac, a Benedictine settlement, had anticipated them and milked the cows before them. Hugues volunteered to do the milking next day, and though some of the brothers volunteered to accompany him, he preferred to go alone. Starting rather early the next morning, he found one of the Benedictines milking one of Etienne's cows. He walked up to the intruder and said, "That milk belongs to my master." But the monk sneeringly said: "Let him ask the pope to send him a cow, and send Hugues de Lacerta to bring it. I will take the milk for our monastery, which has the prior right here and claims all of the gifts."

He had said enough. Before another word could be uttered, he was seized by the neck and shoulders and shaken until every bone in his body seemed to crack, carried to the side of the wall that served as an inclosure, and tossed over with as little consideration as if he

had been a bag of potatoes. He cried: "I am killed! I am killed! That robber from Chalus has nearly taken my life!" Several of his brethren who were near by rushed out, found him in a heap, and listened to his story. They looked over the wall, and there sat Hugues complacently milking the cows, as if he had only been a boy playing leapfrog.

The Benedictines determined to chasten well the follower of Etienne. They knew that one of the things that Etienne made his followers do was not to return blows for blows, but to suffer meekly under any imposition that was laid upon them. Thus Etienne, when the monks had returned with empty jars, had said: "Never mind, it is all for the best. 'Rather suffer wrong than do wrong.' Perhaps they have more need of the milk than we." And with these pious words he sought to console his followers. The Benedictines knew this, and imposed upon the goodness of Etienne. Therefore half a dozen with sticks set upon Hugues to belabor him well, thinking that the beating would all be on one side; but not more than the first blow was dealt before Hugues wrenched the club from the hand of one of the aggressors, who were like so many babes in his hands, and gave them all such a hearty beating that they retreated in agony to their monastery, determined to wreak their vengeance upon Hugues in some other way. After this the cows of Etienne were never molested, and the Benedictines dared not complain of the usage they had received, for that would be an open confession of their theft. So they had to nurse their wrath until such a time as they could be revenged upon Hugues.

CHAPTER V.

THE CONVERSION OF REUBEN AND NAPHTALI.

THE refining and ennobling influence of Etienne on Hugues worked a complete and wonderful change in his character. He was one of those decided men who, when they undertake a thing, carry it to the end. There are millions of such men in the world, and they only need the proper direction. Said a reformed thief some time ago, "Had I spent half the time in some useful trade and employed as a blacksmith's apprentice the ability that was necessary to successfully crack a bank, I would have won easily a fine position and wealth." Many a bandit and highwayman shows the courage which would win him high grade in the army.

Thus it was with this same Lord Hugues of Chalus, who had defied the neighboring seigniors and had been a living terror to their armies in times past; he now became the most honored and trusted monk in the whole brotherhood of Grandmont. The same characteristics won him distinction either as a marauder or a monk. He could not be insignificant if he tried. Within three months from the time that he had entered the monastery he had the confidence of the brotherhood, and Etienne leaned on him as a most faithful counselor and friend. Never was that trust misplaced, nor was Hugues false to what was committed to him.

It was about six months or so after Hugues had entered the monastery that Etienne had occasion to send a message to the Lord of Dorat. On all such errands he had been accustomed to send Hugues, as he not only

went alone, but he always did well whatever his master commissioned him to do. At this time the roads and highways of France were infested with robbers and highwaymen, who made their living as beasts of prey by devouring any human booty that fell in their path. True, a poor traveling monk, with no luggage whatsoever, could not offer any attraction except to cannibals; but the monk was the vehicle that often carried great treasures from one place to another, so that the amounts realized by attacking them were sometimes more than might ordinarily be expected. As a rule, however, these individuals were let entirely alone by the lawless class, as it was a very serious offense to molest them. Besides, if it happened that matters turned to the worst, and in the conflict they came off with a broken skull or were captured and were condemned to the gibbet, one of these "black frocks," as they were called, would be needed to fit the soul for that unknown place hereafter called heaven, which they superstitiously believed could never be reached without his aid. The fairest prey was the knight, who went forth generally equipped with not only good weapons, a good horse, and coat of mail, but also with some gold. He was a prize worth running many risks.

Now it happened that the Lord of Dorat had gone out for a short trip, and the forests that covered a good part of the Duke of Berri's estate and skirted the highway for miles were a perfect rendezvous for these wild, lawless creatures. There were two highwaymen, who for want of better names were afterward christened Reuben and Naphtali by Hugues, who had become famous for their murders and other crimes that they had committed. These two men had seen from a long distance the Lord of Dorat riding along the highway. They resolved upon his capture, but, as they

were on foot and the lord on horseback, it did not look very promising for the robbers. A bright idea struck one, however, and that was this; They should take a rope and fasten one end to a tree, and when the lord should come galloping past, that one should suddenly run across the road just ahead of the horse, and hold the rope so high that it would throw the horse and the rider, and thus put the lord and the thieves on an equal footing for fighting. The plan was a perfect success. The horse was thrown, and before the rider could recover himself he was disarmed, his sword was taken away, and he himself, after a slight attempt at defense, securely bound. This happened on the very road that Hugues was traveling and at the moment he was passing. The audacity of the thing interested him very much, and when he saw the lord abused and bound and beheld the rogues deliberately proceeding to strip him of all that he had, he thought it was time to interfere. He had no weapon in his hand, excepting a heavy gnarled staff such as he always took with him, and although the robbers were well armed with swords and bucklers, Hugues determined to see justice done in his own way. The rascals had taken no notice of Hugues, and were now eagerly dividing their spoils, which were spread out upon the ground before them. Meanwhile they were sharing the contents of a leathern bottle of wine which the lord had brought to quench his thirst on the journey.

Hugues approached the two, and stood a moment unnoticed. Then in a firm tone he said to the brigands, "Give back this man's things, and repent."

The two fellows laughed and thought it a good joke that the monk was playing. Awaiting a few minutes more, he repeated his remark:

"I tell you, give back to the lord the property you have taken from him."

The only answer was, "That black-frocked ass brays as if he was our master."

Waiting a little longer, Hugues said, "For the last time I bid you restore that man the goods you have taken from him."

"By the saints," exclaimed one of them, "the fool is in earnest;" and he made a motion as if to grasp his sword, but Hugues was too quick for him, and a sharp blow from his staff, falling with a giant's strength just behind his ear, left the thief unconscious for awhile.

"What! You want to fight?" exclaimed the other, making an effort to rise; but he too was met by the club of Hugues and left sprawling on the ground.

Not quite satisfied yet, Hugues administered a couple or more blows apiece where they would do the most good. Then, untying the long coarse rope that bound his monk's gown, he scientifically tied the two robbers so securely that they could not escape. Then he gave his attention to the lord.

"Seignior—" said he; but he was interrupted.

"Good father, well done; I could not have done better myself!" cried the Lord of Dorat. "Just loosen these hands and feet, and I will either make short work of the villains here or take them to Dorat and have them hung at sunrise to-morrow."

"Seignior," cried Hugues, "I will leave thee as thou art unless thou wilt promise me that thou wilt let me deal with the robbers, and that thou wilt ask no further punishment."

The lord, who was really glad to get off so easily, readily consented, and when the robbers regained consciousness it was to see their would-be victim mounted on his horse and starting off toward his castle not much the worse, excepting for a few bruises, mostly by his fall. They complained bitterly that Hugues had wronged

them of their lawful prey, but one glance from those steel-colored eyes of Hugues and a tightened grasp of his terrible club convinced them that they had better desist from that subject. Hugues now approached them and bade them get up. Both swore that they were unable, but a suggestive prod from his staff overcame all disability, and the two criminals were marched off from the highway into the woods in the direction of Tours.

After walking for some time, and when the shades of night began to settle, Hugues ordered them to stop. The place was most solitary. Never had the robbers ventured into those recesses. The heavy branches of the large trees united over their heads and seemed to shut out forever the sunlight. The stillness was something awful. Now and then the howl of a stray wolf that smelt human blood gave them an idea of their danger. A large white owl from a branch just over their heads now and then uttered a solemn "Whoo! Whoo!" and that there were any other living human beings on the earth seemed impossible. Not far from where they were a brook of running water gave forth its monotonous gurgle, but all else was like the grave.

Hugues proceeded to build a rude altar from stones, on the top of which he set up his cross. He ordered his prisoners, who were still bound, to kneel down. One of them asked him, "Holy father, what are you going to do with us?"

"I am going to convert you," was his answer. Then, ordering silence, he began the service of the dead, which he repeated from memory.

The wretches now became alarmed and began to cry for mercy, but Hugues paid not the slightest attention to their cries until his service was finished. Then he said, "It is a pity that there is no cemetery to walk

around." This he said because it was the custom among the monks at Grandmont to walk around a cemetery three or seven times every day after repeating the service of the dead. The guilty prisoners thought that Hugues was about to start a cemetery on his own account, and their cries and agony became more piteous and agonizing than ever.

Hugues perceived that his plan was working well. Never in all his monastic life had he been called upon to confess to anybody, but he had his own ideas how it ought to be done. So he called them to him and bade both kneel down, and said, "Now I command you to make a full and complete confession of all your sins, for you may not live until morning."

Vain were their pleas for mercy. Their wail had no more effect on Hugues than the twittering of the birds in the tree above their heads.

"Stop your noise," he would say; "and do not waste my precious time with baby whimperings. What is your name?" cried he to the first.

"My name is Pierre," said he.

"Now tell me all the evils that you have done."

Unhesitatingly the culprit told such a tale of woe as shocked even Hugues. Such debauchery, so much bloodshed, such lives even he was not acquainted with.

"Is that all?" asked the judge-confessor.

"Yes," was the reply.

"Then take that!" said Hugues, and a blow from his staff felled him like a bullock struck by a butcher.

"Now confess thou," said Hugues to the other.

"I can only say that I am a natural brother of Pierre, and that my name is Jean. I have been a partner with my brother all of his life. What he has done I have done likewise. So his confession, which I have heard, will also stand for mine."

"Take that!" said Hugues, and a like blow left him stretched beside his brother.

After that punishment, seeing that his prisoners were not entirely dead, and bringing a little water to refresh them, he repeated the office of the Virgin, and stretching himself upon the leaves was sleeping soon as they only sleep who think that duty has been well discharged.

Before the first ray heralding the rising sun had dispelled the shade from the forest nook where Hugues and his prisoners had spent the night, the newly made monk and servant of Etienne was awake and commenced his worship before even the birds began their songs. The wretches had spent a miserable night. They did not know whether they were reserved for the gallows or for liberty, whether they would be straightway converted into angels, saints, or corpses. The eagerness with which they watched Hugues was painful. As they had been fasting for quite a little time now, Hugues brought them some water and gave them some roots and nuts that he had found as their breakfast, which was just what he himself had eaten. After again making them kneel while he repeated the service of the dead, and had again spoken some ominous words about walking around the cemetery, Hugues bade them attentively look at him. Then, holding up a cross in his left hand and a club in his right, he demanded whether they would be converted and become good monks, or whether they would prefer going back to the castle of the Lord of Dorat and there paying the penalty of their crimes on the gallows. The threatening position of that club and a knowledge of the strong arm that wielded it made them hesitate but very little. It seemed that the proposition of Hugues was just an easy way of getting out of a terrible difficulty; so they both speedily promised to be con-

verted and take the monastic vows. At this Hugues held toward them the cross to be kissed; but they did not understand the gesture, and Hugues gave each one a reminding tap with his club to make them more attentive, and after that they failed not in any particular.

Hugues spent some little time putting them through the necessary preparation that would fit them to enter the great monastery at Tours. He forthwith proceeded to baptize them. As he had never performed this ceremony before, he felt a little awkward, but he was satisfied that there were no critics to complain of his way of doing things. He ordered them both to follow him down to the brook, taking care to have both bound. After repeating the service of the dead, as that was the only service that he knew by heart, he made them both wade out into the brook, which at that place was quite a stream, being about thirty or forty feet wide and in some places about six feet deep. When they reached mid-channel, he bade them halt, and asking them their names was surprised to find one called after the apostle John and the other after his patron Saint Peter. "No, no," said Hugues; "I will never give you such holy names as those, but I heard Etienne read the last time something about Reuben and Naphtali, and I think they are good enough names for you." Then, after repeating as nearly as he could the formula that he had heard used when persons were baptized, he commanded the men to kneel, and with the water coming up to their chins he gave them both several short, quick plunges under the water, taking good care to keep them under as long as he dared without strangling them. After this was done, he permitted them to go ashore. Now he thought they were converted, and the prisoners were loud in their promises and decla-

rations as to what good, pious, exemplary lives they would lead when in the monastery.

Hugues gave them some very good advice, and led them on the way toward the monastery of Tours. Not until they were almost within sight of the walls, and only after he had enforced his exhortations with several well-directed blows of his club, did he venture to take off the bands from his prisoners, who now were so subdued that they were ready to go like two lambs just where their master drove them; for Hugues made them walk before him, and was always so near that the end of his club could mark well any delinquency or change of opinion that might chance to cross their minds.

Hugues had told them the very words to say when they were questioned by the abbot, and now that the doors of the monastery were reached and the great knocker sounded, while they were waiting for the little iron-grated window to open in order that they might announce themselves, Hugues gave them one more searching glance, and his club was raised just in time to prevent the would-(not-) be monks from running away. But the look in Hugues's eye postponed any attempt, and in another instant, in answer to the query, "Who is there?" Hugues answered, "A humble disciple of Etienne, with two novices who seek shelter from the world beneath your pious roof." The abbot himself chanced to be passing, and immediately ordered the doors open, and warmly embraced Hugues, who introduced his prisoners by saying: "I commend to your holiness these two men, who have expressed to me the desire to lead a holy life in your community. They have served the devil well in their day, but sound and irresistible arguments have persuaded them to change that life for one of piety and holiness, for which you and your brethren here at Tours are noted. I have already con-

fessed and baptized them, and now bring them to your holiness, because they were found nearer Tours than Grandmont. If you will consent to receive them and hear their vows, I will be their witness, and will not only thank you, but believe that you will be the means of rescuing two poor souls from death."

The earnest words of Hugues made an impression on the abbot, who in turn was highly complimented by the fact that Hugues had brought these two brothers to him instead of taking them to Grandmont. Already he had heard of the wonderful change that had taken place in the former Lord of Chalus, and now he believed that he was talking face to face with Hugues. So he replied: "I think that I am not mistaken in addressing the holy brother Hugues, whose piety and holiness have become the joy of the whole Church and the especial comfort of his brethren, and I greet most cordially the Lord of Chalus as my brother monk from Grandmont. What you have done is so good that an angel would not refuse it, and it is with the greatest delight that I welcome these new converts to our fold. And now, without another minute's delay, I will sound the appeal to summon the whole brotherhood to the sanctuary, where in the presence of all, and especially of yourself, we will receive their vows."

When he had said this, he ordered the great bell to be rung, and while the monks came trooping into the chapel he gave Hugues the most fraternal greeting, and kissed the two novices on either cheek, and remarked on their "self-imposed flagellations," for which he mistook the disciplinary blows of Hugues's staff that had persuaded them to this life. It was really a solemn moment, or should have been. The brotherhood chanted a hymn of welcome, the abbot set forth the strict and severe life before them, and demanded their assent. They hesitated

a moment, but a glance from Hugues decided them. The irrevocable vows of chastity, obedience, and poverty were taken, and two new names added to the list, and while they were being welcomed Hugues departed. His original mission to Dorat was quickly performed, and he returned to Grandmont, where he kept his adventure to himself.

CHAPTER VI.

PREACHING THE FIRST CRUSADE.

THE closing days of the year 1096 witnessed one of those great turning points in history which Victor Hugo has so aptly termed the "hinges of the centuries." The historic council of Clermont had been held. Pope Urban II was a man of great spirit and energy ; he was a good imitator of Gregory VII, his former master. When he assumed the reins of power, he beheld Christendom in a wretchedly divided condition. Feuds, internal wars, fraternal strifes, innumerable divisions, the veritable outcome of the feudal laws, were everywhere apparent. Over fifty years before the Truce of God, as it was called, had been promulgated by the pope, by which fighting was forbidden from every Friday until Monday, but this was not generally observed. Indeed, it is difficult to conceive of such a mixed, lawless, and ungovernable multitude as the different masses which then populated the European countries.

The Church herself was seriously threatened. Her own laws were disobeyed with impunity, and although Philippe, King of France, had been excommunicated on account of his openly putting aside Bertha, his lawful wife, and taking Betarde, wife of the Duke of Anjou, in her place, the great work of the council was yet to be done, and that was to inaugurate the Crusades. The eloquence and tears of Peter the Hermit had already awakened the interest of the Church. This wonderful man, who went empty handed and unknown from vil-

lage to village, has probably never, in the history of the world, had an equal in arousing the masses.

A short time before the reports brought back by persecuted pilgrims from the East drew Peter out of his retreat, and led him across the land and sea to the places so sacred in Christian history. The sight of Jerusalem affected him very greatly, as it did all the pilgrims. A thousand different feelings moved his soul. This city, which still bore everywhere the marks of misery and divine anger, worked upon his charity and filled him with devotion and zeal. Respect, terror, and indignation alternately filled his breast.

After having visited the sacred places, he went to the Patriarch of Jerusalem, whose long white beard, venerable figure, and the memory of the persecutions through which he had passed impressed most deeply the impetuous nature of Peter. Together they wept over the ills that had befallen the Christians. Peter, whose heart was burning, his face bathed in tears, asked, "Is there not some remedy for these calamities?"

"O, most faithful of Christians!" replied the patriarch; "do you not see that our sins have closed the access of the mercy of God. Asia is in the power of the Mussulman; all the East is fallen in servitude to him; no earthly power can help us."

At these words Peter interrupted Simon and said, "Perhaps some day the warriors of the West will be the liberators of Jerusalem."

"Aye, without doubt," replied the patriarch, "when our afflictions have humbled us, when God shall be touched by our miseries, he will soften the hearts of the princes of the West, and will send help to the Holy City."

At these words Peter and Simon opened their hearts to one another, and embraced each other with tears of

joy. The patriarch resolved to implore the help of the pope and the princes of Europe, while the hermit, on his bare knees on the stone floor of the patriarch's house in Jerusalem, swore a solemn oath that he would interpret the sorrows of the Christians of the East and invoke the arm of the West for their deliverance. To add to the devotion of Peter, and to increase his enthusiasm, was added a vision that came to him one day while prostrate in the Holy Sepulcher. He believed that he heard the voice of Jesus Christ himself calling to him, "Peter, arise; run, tell the tribulations of my people. It is time that my servants should help and deliver the sacred places." These words rang unceasingly in his ears. He departed from Palestine, and, landing in Italy, he hastened to the feet of the pope, and there poured out his tale of woes. His tears, his eloquence, his many terrible facts moved the heart of the pontiff, who saw here not only a chance to deliver the sacred places, but a cause which would unite all the different states of the world and give to the Church a unity and power that she had never been able to exercise over the diverse and contending elements of humanity.

Peter the Hermit was hailed as the prophet of deliverance. He accompanied the pope to Clermont, and was one of the attractions of the great council. After the council had closed, the papal procession started for Limoges. Peter led the way, mounted on a white donkey, bareheaded and barefooted, wearing a long, loose robe of the coarsest gray bound around his loins with a rope, and holding up a huge cross. Thus he entered the chief city of the Limivocies on the eve of the Christmas festival.

The surrounding country had been well advertised of the great event. Urban II, clothed with his papal robes and accompanied by the high clergy of Italy,

France, and Germany, came with him ; and the city was unable to accommodate the influx of strangers and visitors who came to be the witnesses of this memorable occasion. No building in all France would have been large enough to contain the crowd that gathered to greet the pope and his companions. But next to, if not surpassing, the pope in fame was Peter the Hermit. In order that as many as possible might be witnesses of the pageant and hearers of the discourses, a great platform was erected in an open place, and on this was raised a throne for the pope, while around him sat his clerical dignitaries. Most conspicuous on that stage was Peter the Hermit, who never let go of the cross, and sat convulsed with sobs and tears. The platform was surrounded, for over one thousand yards on every side, with one of the largest audiences that ever gathered to hear men speak. There were knights in armor, princes with their crests, lords of the Church and State in all their insignia, soldiers who held their swords ready for the highest bidder, besides an innumerable multitude of peasants, servants (we might say serfs), and small tenants. All, without distinction, left palace, hall, castle, cottage, hut, and poured forth in one vast congregation.

A trumpet sounded, and at a signal from the pope Peter the Hermit, trembling like an aspen leaf, arose to address the multitude. All was hushed. For a moment nothing was heard but the sobs of the speaker, seeking to control his emotions ; but those sobs seemed to be eloquence itself. The countless throng was in sympathy with him before he began, and when his voice did ring out, every ear was strained to catch his words. The address was most fiery and dramatic, full of striking apostrophes. He held his audience spellbound while he recounted in an impressive manner the profanations and sacrileges which he had witnessed, the awful tor-

ments and persecutions of the people of God who desired to visit the holy places. He had seen Christians loaded with irons, dragged off into slavery, bound together under a yoke as beasts of burden. He had seen the Mohammedan oppressors of Jerusalem sell to the children of Christ the privilege of visiting the tomb of their God. He told how they had sold their bread and exposed themselves to the bitterest want in order to obtain this immunity. He had beheld the ministers of the Almighty arrested in the very sanctuary, beaten from the altars, and condemned to an ignominious death. And, as he pictured the blood of the Christians running in torrents through the streets of Jerusalem, he invoked in turn the saints, the angels, and heaven as witnesses to the truth of what he said. He apostrophized Mount Zion, he appealed to the rock of Calvary, and addressed the Mount of Olives in the height of his eloquence, and, rising from climax to climax, he carried the people as with a flood, closing with a burst of tears in which every one of his auditors joined.

After this address, when every heart in that innumerable host was tense with feeling, Urban II arose from the papal throne. Coming forward, clothed with all his pontifical robes, the cynosure of every eye, he thus addressed the multitude :

“ You have come to hear the envoy from the Christians of the East. He has told you of the wretched condition of Jerusalem and of the people of God. He has shown you how the city of the King of kings, which has sent to others the precepts of a pure faith, has been constrained to submit to pagan superstition ; how the miraculous tomb, where death was not able to guard her prey—this tomb, the source of the future life from which the Sun of the resurrection arose—has been sullied by those who will not be resurrected themselves except to be

as straw for the eternal fire. The victorious impiety has spread its darkness over the rich countries of Asia. Antioch, Ephesus, Nicea are become the cities of the Mussulman. The barbarous hosts of the Turks have planted their standards on the banks of the Hellespont, where they menace the Christian countries unless God himself arms against them his children and stays their triumphal march. What one nation, what single kingdom will be able to close the ports of the West against this foe? All Christian countries must interest themselves and do their part in this work—above all others the French. It is in their courage that the Church places her hope. It is because their bravery and their piety are so well known that the pope has crossed the Alps and brings to them the word of God.

“The pilgrims are worthy of all praises. They are the people that the Lord our God will bless, groaning and fallen under the weight of outrages and exactions the most shameful. The elect race are forced to submit to the indignities of persecutions. The impious rage of the Saracens does not respect either the virgins of our Lord or the royal college of the priests. They have loaded with irons the hands of the weak and the aged; they have snatched infants from the maternal breast, and have made them forget the name of God in the houses of barbarians. The hospices which are prepared to receive poor travelers to the holy places have been sadly profaned by this perverse nation. The temple of the Lord has been treated with base dishonor, and the ornaments of the sanctuary have been taken away captive. What can I tell you more in the midst of so many evils? Those who have been able to remain in their desolate homes, the inhabitants of Jerusalem, the guardians of Calvary, the servants and the fellow-citizens of the Man-God—what will they do unless they have a law

to receive and help the pilgrims, if they have not faith and live without priests, without altars, without religious ceremonies, in a land all covered still with the blood of Jesus?

“O, we are indeed wretched, my children and my brethren, that we live in this day of calamities! Are we not come in this century to be reprov'd by heaven, by the sight of the desolation of the Holy City? Shall we remain in peace when she is delivered into the hands of the enemy? Would it not be better to die in war than to endure longer this horrible spectacle? Weep all together for our faults which have armed divine wrath. Let us weep, but not that our tears should be as seeds thrown upon the sand, but that the holy war should light in us the fires of repentance; that the love of our brethren should animate us to combat, and should be stronger than death itself against the enemies of the Christian people.

“Listen to me, O ye warriors! You who look without ceasing for a vain pretext for war rejoice, for here is a legitimate war. The moment is come for you to show whether you are animated by a true courage. The moment is come to expiate all the violence committed in the time of peace, all the victories sullied by injustice. You who have so often been the terror of your fellow-citizens, and who for a vile salary sell your strength to satisfy the revenge of others, arm yourselves with the glaive of the Maccabees. Go, defend the house of Israel, which is the vine of the Lord of hosts. Strive no longer to revenge the injuries of men, but those of divinity. Strive no longer to attack a city or a castle, but win back the holy places. If you triumph, the benedictions of heaven and the kingdoms of Asia will be your portion; if you die, you will have the glory of dying in the land where Jesus died, and God will not forget that you

were seen among his holy warriors. What cowardly affections, what profane sentiments still hold you to your firesides? Soldiers of the living God, do you not hear the groans of Zion? Break all the ties of earth. Do you not hear God saying, 'He that loveth father or mother more than me, is not worthy of me;' 'And every one that hath forsaken houses, or brethren, or sisters, or father, or mother, or wife, or children, or lands, for my name's sake, shall receive a hundredfold, and shall inherit everlasting life?'"

The enthusiasm of the audience now knew no bounds. When these burning words had inflamed their hearts, they all cried, as with one voice, "God wills it! God wills it!" The cry, resounded from side to side, was caught up, repeated, and thundered back again by the swaying multitude.

As soon as calm was restored, the pontiff said:

"You see here the accomplishing of the divine promise. Jesus has said that where his disciples are assembled he will be there in the midst of them. Yes, the Saviour of the world is now in your midst, and he himself has inspired you to repeat those words that I have heard, 'God wills it!' Let those words become your war cry. Let them announce always the presence of the God of armies." Then holding up a cross, he continued: "It is Jesus Christ himself who now comes from his tomb and presents you with his cross. Let this be the sign lifted up among the nations which shall unite the dispersed children of Israel. Carry it upon your shoulders or upon your breast. Let it be stamped on your arms and your standard. Let it become for you the pledge of victory or the palm of martyrdom. Let it remind you unceasingly that Jesus Christ died for you, and that you should be ready to die for him."

Thousands upon thousands hastened to express their

willingness to go to the holy war. The great throng knelt down as one man to receive the papal benediction, and the enthusiasm of the hour was limited only by the multitude. Great promises were held out to all who should go. No engagement was binding if it deterred anyone from going. No promise or contract was sacred or in force if it stood in the way of taking the cross. Even monastic vows could be annulled, and permission was given for all who wished to leave the monastic cell for the "holy militia," as the army of the cross was called.

Never in the history of the world was there a greater outlet for the rogues and discontented, the malefactors and the criminals. Every prison was opened, and every bearer of the white cross was a sort of libertine on his way to Palestine. Abbots and priors of religious houses were ordered to allow any of their inmates who wished to start on this undertaking to receive the cross.

In the monastery of Grandmont, however, there were only two who cared to go. Etienne, who counseled with Hugues on his experience, while he said nothing against the Crusade, in no way favored it; and the two monks who left were discontented brethren, who were only anxious for an excuse to get back among the good things of the world, which they greatly missed under Etienne's strict discipline.

CHAPTER VII.

TWO PRECIOUS CRUSADERS.

IT was a never-to-be-forgotten day in the monastery of Tours when a monk, commissioned by Pope Urban, wearing a white cross sewn upon his breast, and holding up a large crucifix, stood before the assembled inmates, who were gathered in the chapel to hear the preaching of the first Crusade.

The terrible stories of Peter the Hermit lost none of their force by being repeated. The wrongs of the Christian visiting the holy places were duly enlarged upon. Another powerful motive influenced men: They commonly believed that the land of Palestine, which should be the reward of victory, would yield the comforts and luxuries of life without the toil and labor required elsewhere. The vows of the monastery were revoked by papal authority, and large numbers came forward and took the cross.

Among the very first volunteers were the new members of the brotherhood, Hugues's trophies, Reuben and Naphtali. Already the strict rules of the monastery had become irksome to their souls, and they had together been planning a way of escape. Now came an unexpected opportunity, such as they had been most earnestly longing for. In a most devout manner they knelt at the altar and asked if they would be counted worthy to give their poor lives to win back the blessed land. The preacher immediately held them up as a model for all of the others, and lost no time in taking their names and receiving their oath and fastening upon the breast

of each a white cross. "Go," said he; "lose no time in persuading all whom you can influence to depart with haste on this holy mission."

Never was there more prompt obedience than that showed by the two new recruits. After reverently demanding the blessing of the abbot, they started on their way, not waiting for their noonday meal. After getting a good distance from the monastery, they began to caper and play like boys and congratulate themselves on their lucky escape.

"Now what shall we do?" asked Reuben.

"Do?" answered Naphtali; "why, have a good time, of course! We are now holy monks, thanks to the cudgel of that ruffian Hugues, and have a right to enter any castle and be received as princes, and I for one intend to fill this stomach in a way that it has not known since the sad morning that made us monks."

"Aye, aye, thou speakest well, and I am of thy advice," said Reuben. So these two specimens of the Crusade started out. That cloak or rough gown of the monk, with the white cross, covered as precious a pair of rascals as ever started out as parasites on humanity. The first night they spent in a farmhouse, where they were well entertained and showed a remarkable capacity for wine and meat, so that the poor housewife wished that she might never again be called upon to entertain two such feeders; but the next day they took their way to the castle of Dorat, being sure that their disguise was so perfect that the man they had robbed before would not recognize them.

It was just before the portcullis was drawn that the two entered the castle precincts. They were received with honor. The lord of the castle, still lame from his fall and rough usage, limped forth to welcome the bearers of the white cross, "You," said he, "are the first

who have honored me with a visit since the holy father issued his orders. I would gladly join you but for a mishap which I had with two dastardly scoundrels, who met me in an unguarded moment and gave my horse a fall that nearly killed me. However, I shall entertain well those who can go."

The two monks exchanged glances and expressed great sympathy with the lord, who in turn ushered them into his spacious court and then into his castle. Orders were given for a sumptuous dinner, and soon the huge fireplace was filled with roasting sheep and poultry, besides a fat pig that was especially killed to give the crusaders a savory dish. The monks made themselves very agreeable, and recounted wonderful stories of the land to which they were going. At dinner they both indulged to such an extent that they were unfitted to rise from the table; but, as most of the feasters were in the same condition, no fault was found. The lord, however, at a late hour asked the monks to repeat a service suitable for the night. Now here was a very difficult matter. Neither of the two had been at the monastery long enough to know a service; but, as something had to be done right away to avoid suspicion, Reuben bade Naphtali to conduct the service. This worthy arose and said that he and his brother had made a most solemn vow never to repeat the holy service in any other language than Greek, the tongue which their Master spoke, and which they hoped so soon to speak in the land worn by his footsteps. Then he began a rigmarole of "hi ri ho po gurish hum sa," making a long list of meaningless sounds, accompanied by genuflections and motions of the cross, in all of which Reuben imitated his colleague. The effect on the ignorant nobleman was great, and all who were present looked upon the two as most remarkable and learned men.

For the good reason that they were unable to climb the stairs of the castle the rascals asked to remain where they were for the night, saying that they preferred to sleep on the stone floor rather than enjoy the luxuries of the palace, as they wished to accustom themselves to the exposure and fatigue of the journey ; and at the same time they requested that they might leave early, insisting that no one should rise to let them go, as they would let down the drawbridge and open the gates themselves. As all of the household were the worse for the excessive feasting, the monks were not denied their wish ; so when all had retired, these rogues picked up as much of the silver plate as they could conveniently carry and made their way unhindered out of the castle. That day they spent in the woods, sleeping off the effects of the feast.

Was there not a stir in the castle the next morning when the lord awoke at a late hour and heard that a goodly portion of the plate that he valued so highly was gone? The big bell was sounded ; all of the servants were assembled and questioned. The last time that the silver was seen was by the servants, who left it on the table at night, not removing it because of the lateness of the hour. As a good quantity of wine was taken too, with some provisions, it did seem, in spite of all other facts in opposition, that the two monks were the thieves. "I will clear their characters or prove them guilty," said the lord, and, ordering his attendants, he started in pursuit.

The search that day was vain. At night they drew near to the castle of Cocu, near Ambazac, and into the ear of its lord he poured his tale. Early the next morning Lord Dorat, accompanied by Lord Cocu, went over to Grandmont to ask Etienne's advice, Dorat thinking that perhaps it was two of his monks that had

committed the crime. As the brothers were all in the chapel, Dorat saw them, and, having asked Etienne about the two who had taken the cross, he learned that in no way did they correspond to the visitors who had helped themselves to his silver and food. Hugues, who was by Etienne's side, learned enough of the two to be sure that his "converts" were out again working their evils in the land; but he held his own counsel, and that afternoon found an excuse to make a certain journey, which he thought would lead him over the way that the thieves would probably take.

That night Hugues rested in the woods between Dorat and Solignac. Early the next morning his devotions were disturbed by coarse, rough voices, as of men still under the influence of wine. His quick ear caught the direction of the sound, and, walking as stealthily as a cat after a mouse, he drew near the place whence it proceeded. There he saw none other than the two men whom he had last seen taking the solemn vows in the monastery of Tours. He was himself hidden by bushes and entirely unobserved by the two, who were laying out plans for the day.

Already the ill-gotten gains were spent. A wandering Jew had bought the plate for some wine, which they had drunk until they were as badly off as ever. The plan for the day was to wait by the roadside for peasants or farmers, and get from them the money that might happen to be on their persons.

Hugues was planning how he might capture the two. To rush out at them meant that one or both might escape him as a better runner. His only way was to await his opportunity. This was not long in forthcoming. A rich farmer had that morning ordered his peasants to drive a flock of sheep to a neighboring market, and had given them money to buy some cattle; so several of

these men and women were seen advancing along the road.

"My plan," said Reuben, "is to go over by yonder tree and kneel in prayer by the roadside, and then invite these to join us on our Crusade. We can persuade them that the pope has sent for their money, and so escape without the risk of our heads, which have grown unused to blows of late."

"Yes," said Naphtali, "never use red paint until you have to was our motto before we started on the Crusade." So over to the tree they went.

Now was Hugues's opportunity. As the tree was large, he could easily approach unobserved on the opposite side. This he did, and by a quick movement was between the two, with a foot firmly planted on each gown. To bring their heads together several times in such quick succession as to render them senseless was the work of a moment. A cry to the peasants to run for their lives had the desired effect of leaving Hugues once more alone with his converts. His long, stout girdle, which had done service before, was again brought into requisition. His prisoners were firmly bound, and only now wanted strength enough to be marched wherever their master willed.

Hugues was perfectly familiar with the country, and, as soon as his prisoners were able to walk ordered them up, and turning directly from the highway marched them into the great forest that at the time covered this section. A suggestive prod now and then from his staff reminded them of the prowess of the man who wielded it, and the scars they still bore were so recent that they had no desire to tempt his powers. Indeed, the two rascals were as much surprised at the advent of Hugues as if they had seen the evil one take a bodily form and rise up out of the ground to attack them.

They followed the directions of their master like two whipped curs. A word from Hugues was all that was necessary to make them do anything that he desired. For several long miles not a word was uttered except now and then a direction to turn to the right or left. A careful warning was given at the start to keep absolute silence, and disobedience to that command was dangerous, to say the least. Now in the very heart of the primitive forest, miles from any human habitation or highway, near a large oak, Hugues bade them halt. The place selected was on the bank of one of the streams that abound in this hilly country. All around were thick woods. Now and then an open space permitted the sunlight to enter ; but, as a rule, that gloom and terrible silence which nature, undisturbed by man, loves to preserve reigned supreme.

It was just about sundown when the trio reached this lonely spot. The two thieves felt sure that they were brought here to be killed. They did not know of any other reason why they should have been marched so far into the interior, and when Hugues gave the order to halt, they were ready to drop, not only from the blows received when they were first seized, and from which they still suffered, but from the prolonged anxiety as to their fate, for they looked upon their captor as a kind of superhuman creature ; and as they only thought of a supernatural person as one capable of doing them an injury, they feared him with all the dread with which ignorance and superstition can make a poor, benighted being confront the unknown.

The captives were allowed a little water to refresh themselves and to prepare for the ordeal that was before them. How different had been the thoughts passing through the brain of Hugues ! Throughout that walk he had been revolving in his mind different schemes for

converting the two erring men. His whole study was to do them good, and he finally determined upon a line of action.

Hugues set up his crucifix on some stones that he piled into a mound, and, bidding his prisoners kneel down, he began the service for the dead, and then repeated the office of the Virgin and snatches of the mass—in fact, all that he could remember of the different parts of the ritual. Having finished his religious ceremonies, with regret over the absence of a cemetery, he then gave his immediate attention to the unfortunate creatures who were still bound and trembling before him.

“You vile, wicked children of the devil,” he began ; “why have ye added to the guilt of breaking your monastic vows that of theft, ingratitude, and drunkenness? Were there not enough sins at your door to keep you in purgatory forever without this new installment? I had my doubts about your conversion before, but now I am going to make sure of it ere I let you go out of my hands.”

In vain did the wretches begin to promise anything and everything. Their words had no more effect on Hugues than the evening breeze that was passing through the tree tops over their heads. “Yes, I am going to convert you and make you good enough to come with me to Etienne,” was the only answer to their cries and entreaties, and even this was spoken more as if he was talking to himself than in answer to their questions or in reply to their fears.

To gather some dry leaves and sticks, to employ some of his rude and unsatisfactory methods for lighting a fire, was the work of several minutes. When a good fire was fairly under way, to which a plentiful supply of wood was added, Hugues turned again to the crouching captives, and in a deep and solemn voice be-

gan to tell them about hell. It was not much that he knew, but his vivid imagination and rude logic drew a picture so vivid and impressive that it could not be forgotten. He told of the lake of fire and brimstone, with flames reaching out of it higher than the oaks above their heads. He told of demons, with pitchforks whose tines were red hot, standing on the bank of the lake and tossing the victims from one to the other, and finally dropping them into the center of this ever-boiling caldron. He depicted the agony in graphic words, assuring them that sufferings and pain borne on earth were sweet and pleasant sensations compared to the torments of the lost.

His words made a deep impression on the minds of his two hearers. "Now," said he, "I will show you a little how it feels to be in torment, and then you can make up your minds whether you want to spend eternity in that place or not."

Having said this, he loosened the robes covering the wretches, took off all their clothing except their bands, and thus addressed them: "If you were pure, good men, this would not hurt you; but if you are on the way to hell, the fire will burn you." Saying this, he fastened them to a tree, and after repeating the words three times and making the sign of the cross, drew his firebrand across their naked backs. Two almost unearthly yells greeted his ears and rang out through the forest. "O, you poor, miserable creatures!" said he; "what will you find the next world to be if a firebrand on earth makes you suffer so much? Think what it would be if your whole bodies were wrapt in the flames of the lake of brimstone!" And with these words a fresh brand was drawn across the quivering flesh of the writhing sufferers. "Think of hell, which is as much hotter as an oven is hotter than ice!"

In this the way he forcibly illustrated his discourse, ever and anon touching them with a brand when he thought that the smart of the fire was passing from their minds. It was midnight before he thought he could safely stop or was convinced that their endurance was exhausted. They had begged him to kill them outright, but he would say, "What! to go to a place which is so much worse?" and apply fresh torches. At midnight he bade them both kneel, and, suffering as they were, both knelt, happy to think that the fiery applications might cease for a little. Once more the service of the dead was repeated, and, after seeing that his prisoners could not escape and making them as comfortable as they could be with only boughs for a bed and water to soothe their anguish, the converter and, we may now say, the converted both lay down—the one to sleep as a man does who feels that he has done his duty well, and the others to groan, writhe, and toss with their terrible pains all night.

Early the next morning, while the birds were singing their matins to the rising sun, Hugues was up and, having first erected his crucifix, began to perform his morning service. Never was a mother more careful of her children than he was of these men. Now kindness was in every word and every tone. He regretted their sufferings, but hoped it was the way in which they had escaped eternal fire. He bathed their swollen and suffering limbs, and did all that he could to allay their anguish, ever and anon reminding them of the unspeakable horrors of the lost.

These rough, savage brutes of men, who a month before were ready to cut a man's throat for a silver piece, were now deeply impressed. On their own bodies they felt what they honestly believed to be the beginning of the infernal fires. They begged Hugues now to hear their

confession. Nothing was kept back ; indeed, memory was urged to unfold all the courses of crime and guilt they had so long followed. The one great desire of both was to escape torment. Little was their confessor used to hearing such entreaties, and small was the comfort that he was able to impart. His eyes filled with tears, and, with the very deepest feelings his heart could express, he told them that he would ask the holy Etienne to pray for them. That was his supreme consolation for every ill.

Reuben and Naphtali were as eager to follow Hugues to Grandmont as he was to lead them thither. The cord was now removed. There was no longer any desire on their part to escape from him. Their only dread was the future torments which he had made so real to them. Owing to the feverish and worn condition of the two converts, it took more than one day to reach the monastery of Etienne, and when at night Hugues lifted up his crucifix, never were there more devout worshipers than these two thieves and murderers.

That night on the way was one never to be forgotten. The terrible anxiety that burned their souls worse than fire gave both fevered dreams. Reuben, who had dropped into a doze, arose with a shriek, declaring that he had seen the devil himself, and that his claws were grappling his soul. So their confessor arose and set up his crucifix, and repeated the service of the dead and as much of all the other services as he could call to mind. In this way they spent the whole of the night, for none could sleep, and the only comfort was that Etienne certainly would help them.

Late the next afternoon three very worn-looking creatures entered the simple home which served to house the brethren of Etienne, or the "good men," as they were called by the people of the neighborhood. Reuben

and his companion were assigned to cells immediately above Hugues, so that they would have to pass his open door to go out ; for a faint suspicion still lingered in his heart that perhaps they might try to escape after awhile, but that was unfounded. The thieves and highwaymen became the most exemplary monks in the institution. The effect of Hugues's sermon and his illustrations never wore off from their minds or bodies ; they bore the scars until their dying day. But the rigorous life of self-imposed hardship and want, which they eagerly followed, told on them, and the excitement affected their brains. Food was refused, they mutilated their bodies, and suffered all that they could inflict upon themselves, hoping in that way to escape the fires of the pit.

Hugues was as careful and attentive to them as a most tender nurse, carrying them around the cemetery when weakness made them unable even to do that slight penance, and he was the one who in their last moments stood by their wasted bodies and whispered assurances that they had escaped as by fire the eternal flames of perdition.

No one knew their history. They were buried with great ceremony, Etienne himself holding them as examples of the most perfect ideal of monastic devotion, and in after years the bones of these two were venerated as saints and exposed at stated times to the faithful, and were believed to possess the power of working miracles. Their memory was cherished and esteemed in the monastery, and years afterward their names were recalled in the reading of the roll and their virtues were extolled.

It was a great satisfaction to Hugues to feel that his method of converting criminals was a success. He many times thought that he would tell Etienne, but modesty and prudence held him back ; but he, after

Etienne's death, had the matter all written out and substituted different names for these personages.

The monastery meanwhile was becoming very favorably known. No monks were so careful in their behavior, and no abbot so worthy of imitation as Etienne. Far and wide its fame and good deeds became known, and different establishments of the order began to spring up all over France. Many of the lords and nobility thought it an honor to be found among the supporters of Grandmont. By these means revenues were never wanting, and the power of Grandmont was extended, causing much satisfaction to the many friends of Etienne, but awakening the deepest jealousy on the part of some of the Benedictine monasteries that were in the immediate neighborhood. These gave Etienne and Hugues no little trouble.

CHAPTER VIII.

A FUNERAL IN THE MIDDLE AGES.

GREAT excitement was caused one day among the few monks of Grandmont, a little after the morning service, by a messenger rushing into the inclosure and screaming out, "Lord Cocu has fallen down in his own castle and is dying." Hugues was immediately dispatched to carry consolation and comfort to the sorrowing.

The accident had happened in this way: The good lord, as was his custom, went up to the high watchtower of his castle to look out over his lands. The castle was quite lofty and was built on an elevation, so that from its height there was a commanding view of the surrounding country. He could see his flocks, watch his herds-men, see how the crops were progressing, and have a bird's-eye view of the whole domain. Now, this tower was circular and was open in the center, winding stone steps leading to the top. On the summit there was a little barricade and places from which to shoot arrows or cast stones and missiles on an attacking enemy. The lord had been deeply interested in some of the sights that he beheld, and was sitting down on the narrow stone guard that was built to protect the persons on the top from falling within. But the unfortunate man leaned a little too far over, lost his balance, and fell headfirst down on the stone pavement below. The noise of the fall attracted the servants of the castle, who rushed to the spot to find their master dead. Of course the first thing was to send the news to Etienne, the dead man's friend.

All was confusion and wailing when Hugues arrived. Already the servants had tapped a new barrel of wine, and were trying to quench their sorrow in such copious draughts that even in the short time that had elapsed since the accident many were completely overcome and were so intoxicated that they were good for nothing. Hugues, who had entered through the great hallway which served as kitchen and dining room, saw the effects of the wine, and straightway rolled the barrel out of the hall and left it in such a position that all its contents would run out. Then he ordered the servants around in a way that terrified them and brought a little order out of the confusion. Next he was shown into the room where the disconsolate widow was sobbing and screaming on account of her loss. A number of female attendants were only helping to make her more hysterical by their loud lamentations. Poor Hugues had never been in such a predicament in his life. An ordinary man would have retreated, but Hugues was not of that kind. He marched boldly to the middle of the room and in a loud voice commanded silence. The peremptory tones silenced the weeping, and when all was hushed, he lifted up his crucifix and commenced the service of the dead by way of consolation. But the widow kept on lamenting most vociferously. Hugues raised his voice until it completely drowned hers. When he had finished the service, and there was not enough comfort or consolation shown, he began again and went over the same form a second time, and even repeated the service the third time, adding also a part of that to the Virgin. But as the widow showed but little signs of comfort, he advanced just before her and, bowing low, wished her "the compliments of the day," and said that he would ask Etienne to pray that she might have another husband very soon if she would only cease crying. This

good man now returned to Etienne and gave an account of all that he had done ; and when he told how three services of the dead and one of the Virgin had failed to console her, and of the promise he had made to ask Etienne to pray for a new husband speedily, even Etienne himself smiled at the simplicity of his favorite disciple.

After the accident messengers were sent all over the surrounding country to invite the lords and ladies of the different castles to the funeral. A funeral service was one of the great affairs of the time, and it was not often that the people had the pleasure of attending the funeral of a lord. It was one of the gayeties and excitements of life, and only a few were enjoyed by the common people in a generation. As soon as the death was known, crowds came flocking to the house of mourning, which was at the same time a house of feasting. The table was constantly spread, so that, while many might feel a regret that the popular Lord of Cocu was dead, it gave to the poorer classes a chance to enjoy some of the good things of this life. Only a few miles distant (indeed, the properties joined) lived the Lord of Laurière. This lord had lost his wife a few months before, but on this occasion the widower of a few months took upon himself to be the master of ceremonies. He was the general director of the whole affair. As soon as he received the news, his face brightened, and he lost no time in hastening over to Cocu to condole. He bade the distracted widow not to trouble herself about anything, that he would see to all ; and he at once began to prepare for the great day of the funeral. All the gentry of the center of France were expected, and a dinner worthy of the dead lord must be provided. The widow gave the keys into his hands and bade him do as he wished. He was ever coming to the widow for advice,

and would consult with her about many things, and she could always dry her tears long enough to talk with him.

Finally, the set time for the funeral arrived. There was the Bishop of Limoges and many of the neighboring lords with their retinues, but most conspicuous of all was the Lord of Laurière. He escorted the widow as far as was allowable, for the custom was that the male and female mourners walk in separate bodies ; but the lord was the last of the male and the widow was the first of the female. After very imposing ceremonies at the cemetery, as well as at the church of Ambazac, the *cortège* returned to the castle. Here a most sumptuous dinner was served. Wine flowed like water. The very oldest and choicest brands were brought out by Laurière and dispensed with a lavish hand. He urged all, and most especially the widow, to drink. She would not at first, but finally yielded. The wine had its effect. The whole company began to have their sorrow so thoroughly drowned that it was now almost as if it had never been. Laurière had not spared the wine nor neglected himself in its indulgence. As the feast continued, the feelings became brighter. At length the lord could wait no longer. He saw the widow comforted and cheered, and he felt that his time had come to speak. So, clearing his throat, he began : " Friends and neighbors ! It is only a few months ago that I was called to pass through a sorrow similar to that which our dear sister, Lady Cocu, now suffers. What I have had to pass through since then I dare not tell. [Here Lady Cocu began again to weep and moan.] But I want to shield our lady from all of this. I want her never to know the loneliness of widowhood. [Here Lady Cocu dropped her handkerchief.] Yes, I want to take her now to Laurière, and I ask her here that you all may be witnesses. You know that there is much danger for a

poor, unprotected female in these perilous times. [Here Lady Cocu shivered as if in anticipation.] Who knows what might happen if she were left alone? [All were silent, and many nodded assent to the lord's eloquence.] And now I ask you, Lady Cocu, will you now consent to share the fortunes of Laurière and end your widowhood?"

The lady blushed and said, "It is so sudden I do not know what to do."

Hugues, who was one of the guests, but had not partaken of the wine, said, "I knew Etienne's prayers would be answered soon."

Several friends of both parties advised Lady Cocu to accept; so she finally said, "I am sure I could not get along alone, and his lordship has been so kind I cannot refuse."

Then all had to drink again and again until all were merry. A priest was sent for the next day, and a very hard contract was drawn up; but as the dead lord left a son who was almost of age, he received the estate, though the bargain was one that greatly favored Laurière. The guests were all invited to remain to the wedding, which took place just three days after the funeral. The wedding feast was a repetition of the funeral festivities, and at their close the bride and groom went to Laurière, the lord remarking as he went, "That fall of Cocu's was a lucky affair for me."

On entering the new home the bride saw a new broom placed by the door. This she seized and began to sweep most vigorously, as it was a sign that she would be a good housewife. A few weeks passed, and excepting that frequent mistakes were made in names, no one would have thought but that what was once Lady Cocu had always been Lady Laurière.

CHAPTER IX.

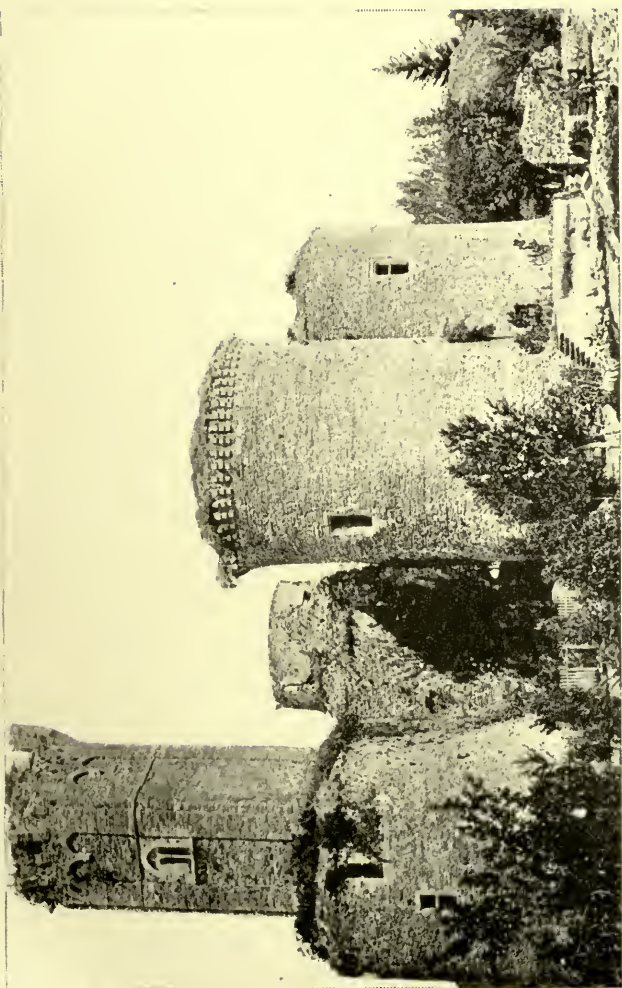
KNIGHT AND MONK.

AT a little distance from the old tower of Chalus,* guarding a pass through which ran the highway between the cities of central and western France, was the castle of Montbrun.

The Lord of Montbrun was exceedingly friendly to the monks of Grandmont, and, as Hugues was well known to all the neighboring lords, it was usual, when a visit needed to be made, to send the former Lord of Chalus on the mission. It was customary for lords and wealthy owners of estates to make certain gifts of land, servants, or money to the monks that they held in the greatest esteem. Especially when a crime had been committed against the Church, or one intended, was it the proper thing to make a gift to their favorite monastery.

For example, when the Vicomte of Comborn, after committing all kinds of evil imaginable, had one day in the heat of passion killed twelve monks who had dared to oppose certain wishes, shortly afterward, frightened by the menaces of the Church, he came to the Bishop of Limoges and made over certain lands to found an abbey for the Benedictines at Maynac. He also gave a chapel at Genest to St. Martin, and having done this he felt that he had wiped out the stain of blood and had

* Within the last few years the noble count has at great expense restored the old castle, as nearly as possible, to the original design, and to-day its massive walls, three meter at the base and two and a half at the top, sixty feet above, is a living monument to the architecture of the past.



RUINED CASTLE OF MONTRUN.

indulgence enough left over to commit many more crimes if occasion offered.

But the Lord of Montbrun had sent to Etienne to say that there were certain things at his disposal any time that he would send for them. So one morning after the sunrise mass Hugues was called into the cell of his master and requested to go to Montbrun to obtain what the lord of that castle had placed at their disposal. As certain supplies were needed, and as the seignior had intimated that his gift was one hundred sous, it was well worth going after. Hugues, after assuring Etienne of his willingness to go, at once took his huge staff, which was his only baggage, and started on the road, expecting to make a very speedy trip.

He paid his respects to his former castle on the way, but would not rest in it all night. He said he did not like to stay around the place where the devil so often had led him into wickedness; and after simply entering to pray that his sins might be forgiven, he went on the little distance to Montbrun. He arrived just as the sun was going down, and had barely time to step over the drawbridge before it was drawn up, and as the portcullis fell it meant that Hugues was to remain in the castle all night. This was contrary to his intentions; but as the very long walk had somewhat fatigued him, he consented, but refused every dainty that was offered and made his simple supper of chestnuts and milk.

The former Lord of Chalus was a very different man from what he had been when last he dined at Montbrun. Then he drank more red wine than any other three at the table, and his brawny fist had come down with so much force that he broke a piece off the board. He thrashed two of the servants, growled at everybody, and was a terror to all. Now, to see that man refusing not only wine, but also all kinds of meat when there was

a roast sheep on the bill of fare, made not only the Lord of Montbrun, but also the servants, wonder.

After the dinner, at the assembly of the castle, Hugues repeated the service for the dead, and after, as was his invariable custom, regretting that there was no cemetery to walk around, begged to be allowed to retire, which was granted.

Hugues had petitioned his host that he might leave at sunrise the next morning. The Lord of Montbrun gave him the one hundred sous for Etienne, and in return received the blessing of Hugues, for nothing ever touched the monk so much as to receive some gift for, or hear praise spoken of, his good master. After thanking the benefactor most heartily, he retired and took his leave, saying that as soon as the drawbridge was lowered in the morning he would resume his homeward journey, for he was sure Etienne had need of the money. So, after kind expressions on both sides the sturdy monk went to his chamber, and after his customary devotions fell asleep, awakening at midnight for his prayers and sleeping again until sunrise, when he arose and hastily left the castle for the return journey.

The castle had been filled with guests. Among others were three lawless vassals, who had seen the lord of the castle give Hugues the money, and who had made up their minds to get it from him. A few minutes after Hugues left these three villians started in pursuit of the monk. Hugues left the highway and followed the woods so as to make a shorter cut and reach the road a few leagues farther on. He had another reason for doing this. He was unlike many of the pharisaical monks of that period, who liked to be found praying by the roadside; but he sought to perform his devotions alone or else in company with his brother monks.

The three rogues, one of whom was a knight and the

two others his servants, followed Hugues at a distance, trying to avoid being seen by the man they meant to rob. The person who planned this robbery, and for whose benefit it was to be committed, was Robert de Nevers, a petty baron, who had squandered much of his estate in debauchery, and was now an adventurer, seeking whom he might destroy. Hugues seemed to him an easy prey, and the one hundred sous was just what Robert needed to make square certain very pressing accounts that the Lord of Chalus had against him, and as this castle would be on the road which Hugues, who was traveling toward Ambazac, would follow, he said to his vassals, "We will let the old bare-head carry the money as far as he goes our way, to save us the trouble, and then we will relieve him of it."

Now after several hours' rapid walking (for Hugues kept up a good pace and tired out his pursuers, of whose presence he was unconscious), coming to a large oak, the monk sat down for a moment's rest; then, setting up his cross, he began his devotions. The first was the office to the Virgin. He had just completed this, and was about to begin the service of the dead, when the villains, who had been following him, thought that the most favorable opportunity for their attack had arrived. One of them with a heavy cudgel stole up carefully behind the monk as he was praying and gave him a tremendous blow on the side of his head that felled him to the ground, leaving him unconscious for a moment. The robbers thought that they could take his silver—they did not care for his life—and be off before he would come to his senses; so they at once began to search for the money.

Hugues had rolled it up and fastened it in a peculiar way, so that it was necessary to get at his body before they could reach the money. Hugues had received

many such blows in his life, and it was no new thing for him. He came to his senses very soon, and with a violent spring threw his two assailants to the ground, and before they could rise he had seized his good staff and with several quick blows stretched them bleeding and senseless on the ground.

The knight at the onset had conveniently hidden himself, so that the two vassals were the only ones seen by Hugues, who thought that they were the sole persons with whom he had to deal. The blows struck by the powerful hand had been harder than intended, but the idea of losing the money that had been given to Etienne so aroused all the righteous indignation of Hugues that he struck with all of his tremendous force, as the broken skulls of his assailants bore witness. Hugues, not seeing them make any signs of returning consciousness, began to examine them, and to his surprise and horror saw that the blows had been fatal. He knelt down by their sides and began doing all that he could to restore them, but only a few groans were his reward; and while he was yet praying over them and trying to confess them, they both expired.

In the meantime Robert had watched the whole scene from his hiding place. Now he came out, and, as if greatly surprised, called aloud:

"Hello, old barehead! What are you doing? Ha, ha! I have caught you, old murderer, lurking under a monk's garb and lying in wait to kill and rob innocent passers-by."

Robert drew his sword and was advancing threateningly toward Hugues, who instinctively seized the staff that had already done such bloody work, and on whose heavy gnarled sides were telltale stains from the last fray. Robert drew back prudently as he saw that cudgel in the hand of the giant, for he had no mind to face the same death that he had seen dealt out to his vassals.

Hugues said : "You mistake me, Sir Knight. I was at my devotions here by this tree, where you can still see my cross affixed, when one of these wretches (may God have mercy on their souls now in purgatory !) gave me a stunning blow with that club ;" and he pointed to the club and instinctively felt of the lump on the side of his head. "They were in the very act of taking from me the money that I am bearing from the Lord of Montbrun as a gift to Abbot Etienne of Grandmont. As soon as I had recovered, I defended myself so well that these two thieves are dead (may their sins be forgiven !), and I was in the act of praying them out a pardon when you came along and interrupted me."

"A fine story you have made up, old man, when I saw you with my own eyes robbing the bodies of the two unarmed men whom you have slain," sneeringly replied Robert, who still kept at a respectful distance from Hugues, so that he might run if necessary, taking good care that the staff should not reach him. "Show me the money that you were carrying and I will believe you."

Hugues, who was as innocent as a child, and who had no more fear than a stone, immediately opened the folds of the garment and showed the one hundred sous that he had received from his host of the night before.

"Give me the money, and we will go over to the castle of Solignac near here and have the matter arranged."

"No," said Hugues, "that money does not leave this hand until it is given to Etienne, unless you succeed in withdrawing every drop of blood from my body ;" and the eyes of Hugues flashed as he spoke, boding no good to the one that should make the attempt.

Robert had no desire to follow his vassals to the other world ; so he did not attempt to take it by force, but he said, with a brusque voice : "Do not think me a robber

like yourself. I do not want your monkish blood on my soul ; but come, let us go to the castle. You will have to suffer the just punishment of your murder and robbery ; and as for your story about being beset by these two innocent tradesmen, it is a finely gotten up lie, for I saw you take the money from them myself."

This was too much for Hugues. He started in pursuit of Robert, who turned and fled, and, being younger and lighter on foot than his adversary, easily kept out of his way.

The course that Robert took was for the old castle of Solignac. The lord of the place was out hunting that morning, and, seeing Robert running, called, "Stop, stranger!" Robert hastened to him and told him how he had seen a horrible murder committed on his domain by a man dressed as a monk, who was seeking to rob all who passed, and that he had just escaped with his life. He was sure there must be a band of these murderous thieves disguised as monks.

He had not finished when Hugues came up. Robert cried out, "Here comes the murderer," at the same time passing to the other side of the Lord of Solignac.

Solignac knew Hugues and addressed him, "Sir Knight, or monk, what means this?"

Hugues then repeated the whole story as he had told it to Robert, Robert insisting all the time that it was a lie and that he saw Hugues take the money from the bodies of the two men whom he had killed. Robert was a knight, and at once declared the truth of his version, swearing on his sword. Hugues in the meantime told his story in a plain, unvarnished way as at first, only stopping to ejaculate from time to time, "May God have mercy on their souls!"

The Lord of Solignac was sorely perplexed at the contradictions, and the earnestness of both parties made

it extremely difficult for him to distinguish the truth. Hugues's story did not seem to be very probable, while Robert's had much more plausibility than Hugues's. The Lord of Montbrun was very penurious, and one hundred sous was more than any ordinary lord would be apt to give. Beside, Hugues did not deny the killing of the men, and said that he was praying over them, while Robert said he was searching their persons. The matter was confounding. How could the truth be arrived at? That was a question that has puzzled greater judges than the Lord of Solignac, when two men tell absolutely contradictory stories.

Nowadays, by a trial in which questioning has been reduced to a fine art, the truth is generally dragged out by examinations and cross-examinations. But even now, after all the experience of men since the first blood of Abel was poured out upon the ground, there is much uncertainty, and often the innocent are condemned and the guilty go free.

In the times of Etienne, eight hundred years ago, difficult questions were settled by different means. There were several methods by which men sought to determine the truth. The judicial combat was one to which the knight appealed, and called on God to witness for the truth. Another kind, by which the ecclesiastics were called upon to prove their innocence, was the "proof by irons." The person accused, after fasting three days, attended mass on the third morning and in a loud voice swore that he was innocent. After he had partaken of the holy communion, the priests and monks, chanting lugubrious hymns, led the way to the place of trial. There the accused kissed the gospels, drank holy water, and sprinkled himself all over with it, especially his hands and his feet, in preparation for the test. Three things had to be done: First, to lift a bar of red-hot

iron, weighing three or four pounds, three times to the full length of the arm ; second, to put the hand into a red-hot iron glove and raise it to the top of the head ; third, to walk barefoot over seven red-hot swords, fastened in the ground.

This " proof by irons " Robert called upon Hugues to perform. It was a terrible ordeal, and there are but few cases where history records its use. One of the most notable was that of the monk who said that he had discovered the head of the lance that pierced the side of Christ. This monk had a dream, he said, in which it was revealed that in a given place the lance head would be discovered, and so great were his exhortations that many of the crusaders dug in the appointed spot. The first day passed and no lance head was found. So the second passed. They were getting discouraged, and the monk begged for one day more. The third day was drawing to a close when the monk descended into the pit and began to dig. At the third blow he exclaimed, " Glory to God and praise to the Virgin ! " and lifted up the head of a lance. It was afterward denounced by Count Gregory as a forgery, and the monk appealed to the test by iron, to which he submitted and declared that he came through it without harm, though he died three days after, probably from its effects.

In this case Hugues did not know much about fire. He had applied it himself most successfully to Reuben and Naphtali after their relapse into sin, but for himself he declared that he had the right to choose the test, and immediately declared in favor of the judicial combat, or duel, as his appeal to God.

This Robert had not expected and, turning away scornfully, said it was beneath the dignity of a true knight to meet as an equal an obscure monk who was unworthy of his steel. He said that Hugues had no

right to do anything but that which was prescribed by the laws of ecclesiastical authorities, and waxed eloquent over the fact that it would be no glory for him to kill a monk unused to arms.

But Hugues said he was willing to leave the matter with God, and die willingly at the end of the lance of his adversary if he were guilty. But the knight, Sir Robert, stood upon his ground of knighthood and said he could not be compelled to fight a monk.

Now the Lord of Solignac was a man who had a sense of justice in his head, and declared that Hugues, as the accused, had the right to choose the test; that the claim of Robert that it would be contrary to the dignity of his knighthood to meet Hugues on the field of judicial combat was ungrounded, for Hugues was as good a knight as he, and more honorable, as he had been the Lord of Chalus; that he had full right to have the truth proved by an appeal to God such as he chose. He therefore ordered that both be taken to separate dungeons of the castle and locked up for three days, giving the following order: "Three days from to-day, one hour before midday, you two shall be brought out to the court of the castle. Thence you shall go to the chapel and make your oaths of sincerity and innocence. From there you will proceed to the place of combat, where the Judge Almighty shall decide who is false and who is true."

Hugues bowed his satisfaction. Robert said "No," and turned to go away, but was seized by the guards of Solignac and taken to the dungeon to await the final trial. Frightened half to death at the turn of affairs, Robert sought every artifice to escape the issue. One plan came near being a success. He bribed one of the servants to poison the wine that was offered to Hugues. The man did not scruple to do it, but fortunately Hugues would not drink.

CHAPTER X.

THE TRIAL BY BATTLE.

AMONG the inmates of the castle were certain Benedictine monks, friends of those whose heads Hugues had cracked for stealing the milk of Etienne's cows. These did all that they could to aid and encourage Robert by telling him how Hugues's strength must be weakened, for they said that he was accustomed to fast and that they had seen him shake with fear. But Robert, who had seen the effect of the blows of the ex-lord on his own two thieving vassals, had no desire to meet the force of the arm that had such power.

The third day came. Hugues had already repeated the service of the dead and walked around his cell three times, while Robert had been drinking the most strengthening liquors that the castle possessed. Hugues, who had full confidence in the justness of his cause, feared nothing, and had no more dread of meeting Sir Robert than he would of meeting a sheep. He cherished no revenge. Even in the pursuit of Robert, when he chased him to the Lord of Solignac, he was possessed by a desire to save rather than destroy his enemy, for he contemplated the same kind of conversion that he had administered to his two former penitents. But the nimble feet of Robert had saved him from conversion for a time. Even now Hugues was trying to plan some way by which he could get along without killing his adversary.

In the interim the bodies of the two thieves were brought to the castle, and, on being searched, there was

found abundant proof that they were in the employ of Robert ; and the fact was developed that they had not been robbed, for in their pockets were found a few sous, and their garments were not deranged as they would have been had they been searched for money. All this told greatly in Hugues's favor. But the Benedictines, whom he had so justly punished, were now anxious to be relieved of this adversary. Besides, they thought that if Hugues were killed the money which he carried would be given to them and not to the men of Grandmont, and they were willing to do all that they could to aid Robert.

The holy water which they prepared for the accused to drink was well doctored. Hugues was not suspicious, and he was saved from their malice by accident, because he would not drink the holy water, but simply crossed himself with it. Robert, having a different cup, drank his dry. They came before the high altar, and on the crucifix, surrounded by the monks and priests in full sacerdotal robes, each declared himself innocent and swore that he had no intent to employ any trick or wile unlawfully against his adversary.

Robert took this opportunity to call his enemy all kinds of vile names and to declare that as a liar his place was in the lowest region, whither he vowed he would soon send him. Hugues simply said, "God knows the truth and will verify the same."

The preliminary ceremonies were now over. The priests and monks led the way to the field of combat. This was a level place outside the castle walls, about eighty feet long by forty wide. The priests were preceded by musicians, and all the inhabitants and guards of the castle turned out to witness the spectacle. Two peasants from a neighboring village joined the assembly. "Tell me, Jacques, which is it that

will be for carrion, the long-robed fellow or the knight?"

"On my faith, man, had you half an eye," remarked Jacques, "you would see that there is more force under that old cowl than there is in half a dozen such as comes under the visor of the knight."

"Yes, yes," said the other; "but the long fasts have made him weak, and he will fall like a bullock under the butcher's blow."

"Ah, no," said Jacques; "but I'll risk a year in purgatory that the knight will bellow like a stricken calf before the long-robed fellow has been at him an hour."

Their conversation was interrupted by a flourish of trumpets, which was the signal for the marshal to read the rules of the contest and place the two combatants in position.

At this point there was a loud discussion, Robert declaring that he had a right to wear his coat of mail, his armor, and his sword, and insisting that, as Hugues had left the knighthood for the monastery, he should have only his robe, cowl, and staff. The Lord of Solignac said that on his grounds two adversaries should stand on exactly the same footing, that they should be armed alike, and that, as there was no armor in the castle that would fit Hugues, both men should appear unarmed, and God would help the one who was in the right.

Robert cried out against this, and said that he was not receiving the treatment which belonged to him as a noble knight, but that the Lord of Solignac was partial. To which the said lord replied by throwing down his glove as a challenge to Robert to meet him after he had beaten Hugues.

Robert declared that he would not fight under the

conditions that were made. "Then," answered the Lord of Solignac, "you declare yourself guilty, and you will be executed within an hour."

Robert changed his mind, and expressed a reluctant willingness to fight, but appealed to the Virgin, declaring that he was innocent, whereupon all the Benedictine monks began a chant to the Virgin to help him. Two swords were brought, and, instead of the judge handing them to the combatants, the monks, under pretense of blessing the weapons according to the custom, had taken particular pains to crack the sword that was given to Hugues, so that the slightest pressure would snap it in two, while Robert's sword had the keenest edge possible. Hugues was too experienced a man to venture into a combat without carefully examining his weapon. His quick eye discovered the defect, and, calling the attention of the marshal to the crack, broke it with the slightest pressure. The monks shouted, "It is the judgment of the Virgin against this hypocrite! It is God's will that he should be executed immediately, for the sword was whole and sound when it left our hands."

But the Lord of Solignac was determined to see fair play, and bade the Benedictines be silent. Then he called for the broken sword, and soon saw how the temper had been taken out of it by subjecting it to heat. The marks of a cold chisel, moreover, were very plain. Stepping into the court, he called for the monks who had blessed the swords to come before him. After a long inquiry it was said that they had gone on a mission of mercy to another convent, leaving the place as soon as that ceremony was over. Several horsemen were dispatched in pursuit of them, but they were never found. The fact was, the whole story of their departure was a deception in order to have the conflict put off.

Lord Solignac then gave the order, "Let no one leave my grounds without my express consent;" and the numerous vassals bowed, giving their assurance that his will would be enforced.

Two other swords were brought. Lord Solignac examined them both and declared them all right. Robert said that "he was not a heathen, and he would not fight with a sword that had not been blessed."

Lord Solignac replied, "Then you will march to the gibbet, where your cowardly carcass will be left hanging to feed the crows."

There was nothing left now but to come to the fight. Robert would have given anything in the world to have been able to avoid facing Hugues, who stood there calmly listening to what was said and protesting nothing against all of Robert's efforts to impose upon him and take improper advantages. He allowed the Lord of Solignac to have his own way, and when questioned said that he was willing to do anything that the judges should deem just.

The trumpets again sounded, and the combatants were brought face to face. The signal was given, and there was a hush over the whole company. Hugues did not even cross himself. His mind was too occupied with what was before him to think even of his profession as monk. All of his old military habits came back to him, and he took the attitude of defense without thinking, just as naturally as one winks. The action was entirely involuntary, the result of habit and custom in the many combats through which he had passed during the years of his worldly life.

The reader may think that Robert was no match for Hugues, but physically there was not very much difference. Robert was large, perhaps taller than the monk, besides having the advantage of youth. He was want-

ing, however, in that especial make-up that develops a man of strength and courage. He had always managed to bluster and make a great noise, so that, for one reason or another, he had gotten the glory of victory without ever fighting. Indeed, he was at heart one of the most servile cowards that ever grasped a sword, but he was always saying what he could do if his enemy were his equal—if he were as large a man as himself, if he were of the same rank, if he were older or younger; but he always left himself a convenient excuse to creep out of an actual engagement. Sometimes his bluster and bravado cowed weaklings into submission, but his general plan was to do as he did when seeking to rob Hugues—hide behind a thicket and get others to rush into the danger, and if they were successful he would rush up and claim the whole of the glory and, if they were beaten, then he would conveniently disappear or come up as a protector.

In the case of Hugues he had completely missed his mark. He thought that he would force the poor monk to have his hand or feet ruined by the test of fire, and then, by crying out for execution, he would have claimed the money and the glory of unearthing a robber.

But when he found himself face to face with a well-known knight, whose prowess on the field had been shown in a hundred places, and when he had the convincing evidence before his own eyes that Hugues's arm was not yet palsied by seeing the two strong vassals laid low by his club, he sank down on the ground before his adversary and began to howl, saying that he had been poisoned, and making as though he was writhing in the most terrible agony. Lord Solignac was thoroughly disgusted, and said the best thing in such a case was bleeding, and rushed over to the groveling knight and pricked him with his sword, saying, "Get up and fight or go to the gallows!"

He ordered his vassals to march forward and lead him to the gallows. At this Robert now said he felt better, but asked for the fight to be postponed.

"On no account," answered the Lord of Solignac, at the same time ordering him either to fight then and there or be hung. The choice seemed very nearly even for Robert. Meanwhile Hugues, who was waiting, put his cross on the sword, which he stuck in the ground, and began a service of the dead, much to the fear of Robert, while the Benedictines said that he was reciting his own funeral service, and bade the coward take courage. Hugues had just half finished when the field was again cleared, and the trumpets sounded the signal to begin, and the foes were left to fight out the truth.

The moment the signal was given this third time Robert made a dash at Hugues with an impetuosity that would almost have knocked down an elephant. But Hugues braced himself, and by a skillful twist not only warded off the blow, but threw the sword out of his enemy's hand. Many shouted, "Bravo!" Robert, who fell prone upon the ground, expected every moment to have Hugues's sword thrust through him, and he lay there bellowing like a bull with a knife in his throat, although there was not a scratch on him, Hugues standing off a little distance asking him if he was hurt.

At a sign from the judge one of the vassals ran over to the fallen man and examined him. Robert screamed, "I am dying, I am dying! That son of iniquity has employed his infernal arts against me. I am dying!" But not a drop of blood, not a scratch could be discovered on him except where the Lord of Solignac had pricked him with his sword. Again he was ordered to get up or go to the gallows. When he arose, trembling, the judge, turning to Hugues, said :

"You have the right to a blow equal to that which he struck at you. Now take it if you will."

Hugues answered :

"God forbid that I should take any advantage of the wretch. May God forgive his sins and save his soul! Give him his sword."

Once more the men were brought face to face. Robert began another way. He sought to run around Hugues, being much younger and more nimble on his feet, and give him a thrust from behind. Indeed, he did give Hugues a scratch below the waist that put the older man on his mettle. Hugues quickly turned and, changing his attitude of defense, followed up the attack. In another minute there were two quick sword cuts, and both of the arms of the cowardly Robert fell bleeding to the ground, while the wretch himself dropped on his knees, and, lifting up his bleeding stumps, cried like a whipped child for pardon, and confessed before the whole multitude his crime and told the whole truth—how he had coveted the money and urged his two vassals to commit the crime, and then how he had persecuted Hugues with the hope of getting the money.

It was enough. Hugues was on his knees in a moment trying to bind up the wounds, but the Lord of Solignac said it was no use; and in spite of all the entreaties of Hugues and the protests of the Benedictines, who were sure that Hugues had employed some black art that was forbidden by the laws, Robert, bleeding and moaning, was hurried away to the gallows, Hugues begging for his life and doing all in his power to save him, pardoning him of all his sins and granting him full forgiveness. The other monks followed, chanting their most solemn hymns and glowering on Hugues their most savage looks. Indeed, he thought he felt a blow, and, turning quickly, saw a monk hide a dagger in his

gown. Seizing the fellow by the throat, he made him throw down the weapon, and, seeing his own garment cut, knew that the point of the instrument of death had only been kept from his body by the coins of the Lord of Montbrun.

Lord Solignac saw the action and ordered another rope on the gallows for the monk, who said that he had no intent to kill Hugues, but wished to see whether he was the evil one or not. But all was in vain ; he was placed beside Robert, and in another moment, after the prayers were ended, they both were swung into eternity, while the monks and witnesses were shouting prayers and making the sign of the cross, sprinkling holy water all around, and raging like madmen.

Hugues felt very badly and fasted, incessantly repeating prayers, not only for the two thieves whom he had killed, but for these two who had sought his life.

It was the intention of the Lord of Solignac to leave their bodies hanging there, but Hugues joined with the others in asking for a Christian burial, and their request was granted. On examining the bodies it was found that the vulnerable parts of the person of Robert were carefully protected by pieces of metal and plates of steel that would have saved him from sword thrusts ; these had been given him by the monks. On the body of the Benedictine was found a notice intended for Robert, saying that he had poisoned the holy water that Hugues was to drink, and assuring him that no effort would be left unemployed to destroy his enemy.

When these things were brought before the Lord of Solignac, he ordered an investigation. The Benedictines saw that they were discovered, and at once began to deny the whole truth and make Hugues out a hero and praise the Virgin for proving the innocence of the monk. They also praised his Christian

spirit and said many pleasant things about him, and at the same time bribed several to swear that the monk just hung had been a kind of lunatic, that the letter was a forgery, that all the Benedictines had been praying for the success of Hugues all of the time, and that he had been saved by their intercessions with the saints. All of this they repeated to Hugues, who simply thanked them.

Lord Solignac wished to make a great feast in Hugues's honor, but the latter declined. Then the noble lord promised to give what the feast would cost to the Abbot of Grandmont. To this Hugues yielded, and, kneeling down, he thanked Solignac for what he had done for him and prayed for his salvation and prosperity. Then, asking to be dismissed, even though the sun was setting, permission was given and he departed, but not before he was burdened with another one hundred sous for his dear Etienne, a gift from the Lord of Solignac in testimony of the bravery and courage of the faithful monk Hugues, whom the saints had vindicated.

A number of the Benedictines offered to accompany the hero on his way, but Hugues said, "No, I thank you ; with God and this staff I fear nothing." And when they insisted, he appealed to the lord to keep them at home, which he did, threatening them in a way that made them afraid to go farther with their intentions, for their malice was so great that when one way to destroy Hugues was closed another one was sought. Baffled at every point, they saw the object of their hatred depart with glory, unscathed, and with a rich offering for his master which they coveted in vain.

CHAPTER XI.

HUGUES RETURNS TO GRANDMONT.

THE excitement of the last four days had been so great for Hugues, who was accustomed to quietness and routine in his mountain retreat, that he hardly knew whether he was walking on the earth or in the air. His heart was much more touched for the two thieves than for the two men who had perished on the gallows. His conscience was not so easily satisfied on that point, and many a time on his way home, as he walked in the darkness, would he stop and repeat the service of the dead, and he ended every prayer or chant with the words, "May God have mercy on their souls!"

The night was something terrible. One of those fearful storms that rage around the mountains of the Limousin was sweeping the country. Hugues had fasted for nearly twenty-four hours, but still he was so accustomed to long periods of abstinence from food that he went on, only feeling a slight weakness. The blinding rain only helped to cool his brow. Now and then he would stop and, holding up his cross, repeat a part of the service for the dead, thinking that in the repetition of those words there was some virtue for the souls just departed; but seldom did he think of himself. True, his conscience was not easy on account of the thieves, but there were different sides from which to look at it. He relieved his mind by saying that he would go and confess all to Etienne. This he kept repeating to himself, and he would do whatever Etienne said was best; for as a little child, who has a great desire to do what is

right, but is puzzled over some matter that seems to present contradictions to the infant mind, satisfies himself by saying, "I will ask mother; she will tell me all that I wish to know," so this giant Hugues confided everything that puzzled his conscience to his master, whom he loved with all the tenderness that a child loves its mother.

Not one moment of rest did the weary plodder take. His brow was throbbing; it seemed as if there were fire within his robe, and the rain beat down with unceasing violence, retarding but not stopping his progress. He continued keeping to the highway. Now and then, as he passed through the forest, he heard the howl of wolves, which sometimes came so near that he could hear the snap of their bloodthirsty jaws. Still he did not fear nor heed them. His mind was too full, his heart overflowing, and he hastened on to reach his master's cell.

It was long past sunrise when Grandmont greeted the fever-stricken traveler. His weary limbs refused to go any faster, but he urged them as a driver urges on his steeds that have already done their utmost.

The morning masses were ended, and there was a little rest for prayer before the other service commenced. Just at this moment Hugues dragged himself into the cell of Etienne. He did not say a word, but drew from his robes the one hundred sous from Montbrun and the one hundred from Solignac, and, placing them on Etienne's lap, sank down exhausted on the floor.

Etienne, supposing that it was only fatigue, began to chide his follower in a kindly tone for exposing himself to the elements. "My brother," he said; "it is as unlawful for us to take our lives by exposure as it would be to take them by violence." Then, feeling of the hot

head and getting no response from the silent form, whose feverish breath came quicker than before, he realized the condition of his disciple. It did not take him long to lay the sufferer on his own rude pallet and kneel by his side in prayer. Etienne looked on Hugues just as a parent looks on a child. He responded to all the affection that Hugues had given, he rejoiced in him as the obedient and faithful monk, and regarded him as a brand plucked from the burning.

The exemplary life of Hugues ever since he had taken the vows, together with the softening influence that he had on all the others in the brotherhood, bound him very closely to Etienne's heart. How little did the good man know of what Hugues had done, how thoroughly he was enlisted in the good of the order! The affair with Reuben and Naphtali was unknown to the chief; only he had seen these two men brought in by Hugues, and had noted what wonderful lives of sacrifice they had led ever since they were in the monastery. Etienne's quiet nature would have shrunk back from the force of Hugues, and in that age one was as necessary as the other. In fact, Hugues had done much more than simply live in seclusion. His influence had molded Etienne and was beneficial to him, and in return Etienne had rounded off his sharp corners. The effect of each, the one on the other, was supplementary, and their union combined nearly all the great and noble virtues that grace and strengthen humanity.

As Etienne bent over the suffering brother, he could not keep back the tears, but whether they were tears of joy or sorrow would be hard to tell. There was such a blending of different feelings—joy, pride, pain, sadness, pleasure, and grief all united—that the outcome of it all was tears; for Etienne had a nature that was feminine in tenderness and sympathy. He was startled by the

muttered words that now and then came from the sleeper, who began to toss wildly and speak incoherently. "You would take Etienne's money?" "I did not mean to strike so hard." "Ah, they are dead." "God have mercy on their souls!" Then would come snatches from the service of the dead. "I protest, I call upon God to be my judge, and I appeal to him in judicial combat." "My Lord, see, this sword is cracked!" "Ah, ha! you mean to stab me! See the dagger!" "Do not hang them, do not hang them in their sins. Give them to me; I will convert them as I did Reuben and Naphtali." "O, what would Etienne say? God bless him, I will ask him to pray for those two." "May God have mercy on their souls!" "I did not mean to strike so hard." "I only meant to disarm him." "I did not think Lord Solignac would hang them."

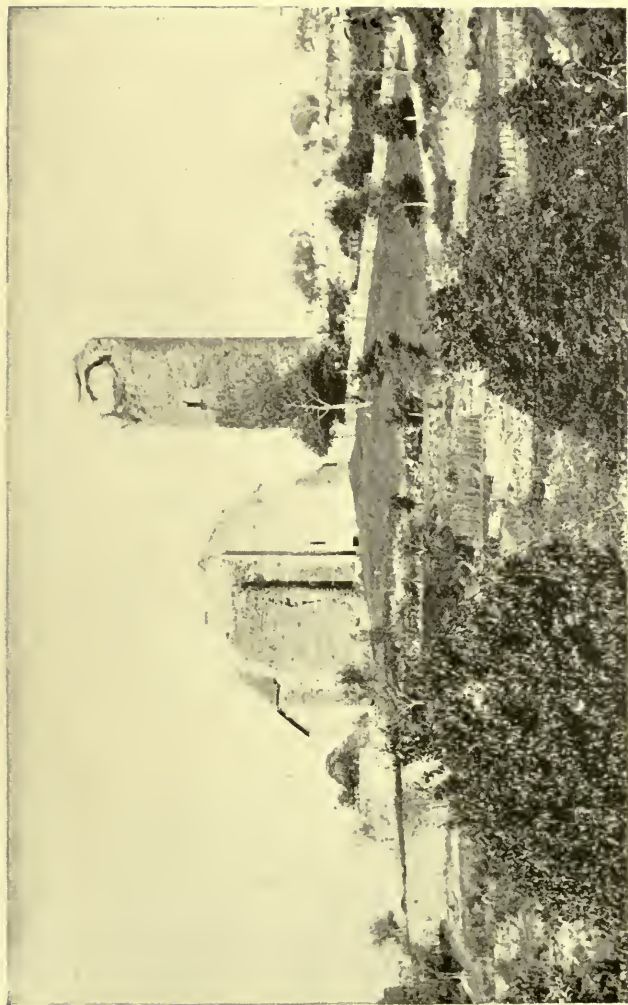
So poor Hugues, who was in a delirium of fever, raved and spoke incessantly. Etienne called in one or two of the most trusted brothers, and they said: "He is talking probably of the sins that he had committed before he came into the order. What a terrible thing it is to have a burdened conscience!"

But Etienne felt that he was not speaking of his former life. There was nothing sensual, nothing profane or sacrilegious; there was no drinking or carousing, such as was the delight of the man before he took the vows and came to Grandmont. The abbot soon found an excuse and sent the others away, remaining himself by the side of the delirious sufferer and nursing him with all the tenderness of a mother, moistening his parched lips, fanning his burning brow, and performing many little acts of kindness. He sought some calming herbs and administered them carefully, but it was a long while before Hugues settled down into a calm sleep

and awoke to consciousness. The terrible ordeal that he had gone through, the anxiety that he suffered on account of Etienne's money, the encounter with thieves, vassals of the cowardly Robert, and the exposure to the pitiless storm—all combined to give a severe shock even to the iron constitution of the Lord of Chalus, who did not take into account that the long fasts and ceaseless vigils had made him a much weaker man than when he used to lead his vassals from one fray to another, with the proud boast that he could sleep as well in the water as in his bed, meaning that he did not mind the elements.

It was a long while before Etienne would allow Hugues to repeat the story of his trip and make his confession, which he was impatient to do. At length the time came. Hugues began from the moment that he left on his mission. He told the feelings that came over him as he saw once more the old castle walls of Chalus where he had been so long master, how he went in to pray and hastened on to Montbrun, how he had received the money, of his early start, of his act of worship, and the attack of the vassals. Here he paused, his tone became altogether different, and tears began to flow down his face as he narrated with great particularity the events that had resulted in the lamented death of Robert de Nevers, his two vassals, and the would-be assassin. Finally he told how the Lord of Solignac had pressed upon him for Etienne the other one hundred sous, and how he had started just at nightfall, and, the storm coming on, he had faced it all the way. After leaving the money in Etienne's hands he could remember no more.

The story was told very simply in its nakedness. No point was covered up, unless it was the maliciousness of the Benedictines. The recital brought tears to the eyes



RUINS OF HUGUES'S CASTLE OF CHALUS.

of Etienne. Hugues's only anxiety was about the vassals of Robert who were slain. "Slain piteously," said he. "I did not strike to kill; I did it only to keep the money and to save them."

"How didst thou expect to save them by blows?" said Etienne.

"Why, the way I saved Reuben and Naphtali," answered Hugues, with surprise that Etienne could ask such a question.

"And did blows save them?" continued Etienne.

"Yes;" and Hugues repeated the whole story of their first meeting, their terrible relapse into sin, and of the way he had found them and brought them into such fear of hell fire, of their confessions, and death.

Etienne, who had so high an opinion of them, was shocked and looked on Hugues with astonishment. "Thou art a veritable Boanerges," said Etienne. "It would seem that the Lord is making use of thine arm, rather than thy tongue, to win men. Was not Malchus converted by having his ear cut off? And so, perhaps the Lord is working through thee; certainly the results of thy works were far better than some of mine, for never had I two more devout or sacrificing monks in the brotherhood than Reuben and Naphtali. I counsel thee, however, in the future to put less muscle in thy logic, for if they die as did thy last victims their conversion is an uncertain quantity.

"But I must ask thee," continued Etienne, "of some further things thou hast not well explained. Didst thou observe some Benedictine monks at the castle of Solignac?"

"O, yes," said Hugues; "I said nothing about them because I could say nothing good."

"What did they say to thee? And tell me of their actions," said Etienne.

"Father, I sought to hide their actions; but if thou dost insist, I will reveal it all."

"Tell me, my son. Why shouldst thou hide these things from me?" and Etienne's brow clouded as he spoke.

"Because I do not wish to hurt thy good opinion of these monks," said Hugues. "But as thou hast desired, so shalt thou know all;" and he recounted the story of the cracked sword, their shout of "To the gallows with him!" their attempts to poison him, and the letter found on the monk who was hung.

Etienne fell on his knees when Hugues finished, and began to pray for them that they might be pardoned. Then, turning to Hugues, he said, "Enough for to-day. To-morrow I will show thee why I ask these questions. Sleep now and rest well. Do not make the tour of the cemetery to-day, for it isn't fit for thee to expose thyself;" and with a long and tender embrace and a kiss of peace Etienne parted from his follower with strange feelings.

His appreciation of Hugues was greater than ever. There was in his sturdy and earnest nature much that appealed strongly to the sentimental, æsthetic nature of the abbot, and he went off to meditate how he should answer Hugues and what was the right thing to recommend to his follower, who was so earnest and faithful.

CHAPTER XII.

FALSE WITNESS.

THE next day Hugues, having been greatly refreshed by relieving his mind, and rejoiced by an approving conscience, felt his innocence like a child. His strong physique had been terribly taxed by the strain and fever, but he was on the road to a rapid recovery; in fact, he called himself well and insisted on doing all the regular service of the monks. Etienne, after the morning meal, called him to his cell and greeted him lovingly.

"My son," said Etienne, "are you strong enough to bear up against some very bad news that I must tell you?"

"My father," said Hugues, who had seated himself on the stone floor of the cell, "I am able, with God's help, to face the devil himself, and am always ready to hear whatever my father has to say. His rebukes are blessings and his penances are pleasures for me."

"But, my son, I have something here that has almost crushed me. I know that there are falsehood and malice somewhere, and I am sure that my dear Hugues is not the guilty one."

"My father," answered the poor man, with the tears coursing down his grizzled face, "my whole heart has been opened to you; and I wish that you could look into my soul with the all-seeing eyes of God, to whom the night is as the day, then would you know that I have told you all the truth."

For Hugues to weep was a terrible thing. His whole

body shook ; it was the breaking up of mighty forces. And while he had, as a rule, control enough over his muscles not to make either noise or grimace, yet in that eye, streaming with tears, and that body, in which violent emotions struggled with muscle, the conflict was one that would touch an ordinary beholder, for there is something inexpressibly moving in the tears of a strong man ; and when one long unused to tears, like the former Lord of Chalus, is breaking up with emotion, there is a tremendous cause that makes itself felt on all beholders, whether they know the exact reason or not.

Poor Etienne was almost overcome at the sight ; but what had almost crushed Hugues was that for a moment a shadow of distrust had crossed the mind of his father in the faith. Instinctively, though not a word had been spoken more than the simple but impressive answer just given, Etienne anticipated the thought that was passing in the mind of his friend, and said : " No, no ; a thousand times no. Not for a moment did I think that my dear brother Hugues had in the slightest particle deceived me. I only wanted a proof by which I might turn the force away from him whom I love so well."

Hugues started up at this. The tears all left his eyes. " Tell me, tell me," he cried, " O father, what the powers of hell have done to overthrow me. With your confidence and belief in my innocency I can stand against them all. Tell me, that I may go and force the lie down their throats, that I may clear my name and free the monastery from a cloud of suspicion."

Etienne was somewhat startled by the impetuosity of his fellow-monk, but for his response he took from his garment a letter, and, as he knew that Hugues was not able to read, he began the epistle, which was as follows :

“TO THE MOST REVERED AND MUCH-BELOVED ETIENNE DE MURET, ABBOT OF THE MONASTERY OF GRANDMONT: Grace to you, and the blessing of Heaven be poured upon your worthy head.

“Knowing your great holiness and the love that you have for truth and honesty and the reverence that you show not only to the Trinity, but to the blessed Mother of God, we holding ourselves as always unworthy to loose the latchet of your shoes, and praising the saints that in these days of crime and lawlessness you are permitted to set before the world a pattern of godliness and virtue which is known and spoken of everywhere, from the Holy See unto the farthest chapel of the West. Know then, beloved, that interest in your cause and brotherly affection for you urge me, much against my nature, to bring the following facts to your knowledge, in order that you, governed as you are by the laws of God and delighting in righteousness, may know how to act.

“As before said, it is out of the sense of a painful duty (and the tears wet this parchment as I pen these words) that I am forced to inform you that the man whom you have so carefully trusted many times on your different missions is one unworthy of your confidence, and is not only undeserving of a place in your holy community, but he is one who has frequently violated the most solemn vows, and just now has added the most cruel and inhuman murder of more than one poor victim who has been sent by him, unshriven, into eternity. He has heaped sin upon sin by frequently laying violent hands on what was our property, which we have refrained from speaking about before, hoping that the sanctity of your presence and the influence of your prayers might change this child of the devil; but we find that he is continually growing in sin, and has within

the past few days killed two innocent men and been taken in the act of robbing their dead bodies. Through his infamous lies much evil has been done to us, and he has just borne away one hundred sous from the Lord of Solignac, which he stole most criminally.

"The information herein furnished was most unwillingly given by two of our most holy monks, whose lives are veritable epistles of love and sacrifice, and who in great agony gave these facts, bemoaning that God had made them see this great wickedness, and offering to take the punishment on themselves rather than that another should be condemned by their testimony. I doubt not that this 'child of all subtlety' will swear most solemnly that these charges are false, and doubtless will assume the rôle of a hypocrite before thee. But thou knowest the rule, old as the laws of Moses, and renewed by the holy word of Jesus Christ himself, 'that in the mouth of two or three witnesses shall every word be established.' We sorrowfully assure you that these two holy monks are ready now to give their testimony, and I say with a heart full of untold agony that the law must take its course.

"Hoping that divine grace may illumine your eyes so that these awful facts may appeal to your just soul, we commend you to God.

"(Signed,)

ABBOT OF SOLIGNAC."

Etienne, choking with sobs, ceased, while Hugues, as soon as the letter was ended, said, "May God have mercy on their souls and convert them!" and asked that he might be allowed to go immediately to the Lord of Solignac and call up the abbot and all to bear testimony that he might vindicate his character.

"No," said Etienne; "there is no call for you to jump into the lion's jaws. If they can concoct such lies about

you, (and may God forgive them!) they will not hesitate to murder you."

"Fear not," replied Hugues. "God will defend his own, and I will put my case in his hands as long as you have confidence in me."

"No, thou shalt not go; but I will send a messenger who will bear a letter to the Lord of Solignac, as well as to the abbot of the monastery, and I will summon them all to give their testimony at a suitable place, where we will pray heaven that justice may be done."

"As you will, father," said Hugues; "but methinks that it would be better to go there and have the matter finished at once. I have often, when traveling alone through the forest, been attacked by wolves, having nothing but my sword or staff to defend me. Many a time have they barked and snapped at me, but I found the only way to save my blood was to turn suddenly upon them and with my club strike so quickly that several were laid low before they had a chance to unite. Then the whole pack would seek their holes, and return after I had gone a long distance and eat up the fallen and wounded ones on the field. This, I think, would be the best way to fight these wolves who are thirsting for my blood because I have unearthed some of their villainies, and they think that I have poisoned you with reports that are true about them, but which you know I did not tell until you, as my father, asked me about them; then I felt that I was in duty bound to tell all, which I have truly done. I am sure," continued Hugues, "that they will be satisfied with nothing short of this poor life, which is so ready to be cut off if my Master wills it."

Now Hugues had recovered his natural voice. Even a smile began to play around his bearded face. He was

in no fear, and was willing to go right then and there and have the matter settled.

After his departure from Solignac the Benedictines had held a council. It had been their plan to accompany Hugues a part of the way, ostensibly for protection, and when he was in a secluded spot to have him murdered by some convenient hirelings; for at this time a murder could be committed and the murderer escape by paying a fine. The sum was fixed on the head according to the rank, and it was simply a question of money as to whether one could commit a crime and escape the penalty. The one hundred sous which Hugues carried would have left the murderer, after conviction, with a balance of seventy to commit a couple of others, and live like a prince for a month on the other ten. In other words, the law counted a monk's life worth thirty sous. But the determination of Hugues to go alone and the order of the Lord of Solignac that no one should leave the castle without his express consent prevented the Benedictines from carrying out that plan.

They agreed that, now that Hugues knew the villainies they had perpetrated in trying to poison him by the wine and holy water, and also the trick with the injured sword and the attempt of Brother Judas to assassinate him, these facts would give them a bad reputation. They determined to study out some means of making away with Hugues, whose continued existence was a threat to their own; so they went to their abbot, who was not a bad man, but too indolent to give much heed to the affairs of his monastery. He would dream away days and weeks with mental pictures. He was very sickly by constitution, and his council did all the regular work. He signed all that was given him, only asking if it were all right, and never troubled himself to know what was going on.

The letter to Etienne had been written by an Italian monk who was aspiring to the priory, and who did not scruple to use any means to thwart Etienne, of whose monastery he was jealous and whose good name was counted an injury to their own.

The bull of Pope Hildebrand, or Gregory VII, gave to Etienne no master other than the occupant of St. Peter's chair, so that there was no use of intriguing with the bishop or any ecclesiastical authority. The great source of trouble was the fact that the Lords of Montbrun and Solignac had each given one hundred sous to Grandmont. This, the Benedictines said, was just so much taken away from them, for the two castles were in their district, and, as the money was in their territory, it was theirs, and it was no better than stealing for Etienne to send Hugues for it; *ergo*, Hugues had stolen the money. A thief could not be worthy of belief; therefore the testimony that Hugues gave about the death of the two vassals of Robert was to be discredited. What Robert had said was the undoubted truth, and that poor wretch, when he confessed, was probably under the spell that Hugues had cast over him.

So the whole thing was argued to the complete and logical satisfaction of the Benedictines, who made the testimony and logic conform to their wishes.

Having persuaded themselves of this and written the letter just given, they thought that they had woven a web around Hugues that would destroy him, and in the event of his fall they hoped also, later on, to involve Etienne, and so break up the little band who were fasting and praying up in the gloomy recesses of the bleak mountains of the Limousin.

The plans were well and deeply laid; to carry them out seemed very simple. A Benedictine monk had taken the letter to Grandmont only a few days after the

adventures of Hugues in the castle of Solignac. Etienne had kept that letter during Hugues's illness. Believing him innocent, he watched and tended, rejoicing at his recovery, so that his noble follower might set himself right before all and show how mistaken the Benedictines were in their estimate of him.

Just as soon as Hugues was able, therefore, Etienne read the letter. Now the chief pondered well, and spent several nights in prayer and fasting to know how he should frame an answer to the reverend Abbot of Solignac. Hugues would have saved him the trouble by facing the lion in his den, but the good father loved his brave son too well to allow such a risk.

"I could see thee burned at the stake, like Aurelian, or crucified, like St. Peter, if thou wert to go to a martyr's doom and receive a martyr's reward. But how could I see thee murdered by thy brethren, who partake of the same holy communion as we, and who have the same faith? Besides, they would say it was the judgment of God on thee for the crimes that thou hast not committed."

So argued Etienne, and Hugues, who thought that his master was the very personification of wisdom as well as of holiness, assented to what he considered superior judgment. At Hugues's request he sent a letter to the Lord of Solignac, as well as to the abbot.

"TO HIS EXCELLENT HIGHNESS THE LORD OF SOLIGNAC, GREETING: Your humble servant in Jesus Christ, wishing for you and praying that all divine gifts may be yours, being pressed down by grief, occasioned by certain reports that have been brought to our knowledge as follows: It is reported that my fellow monk and much-loved follower, Hugues (late Lord of Chalus), while passing through your domain, has with murderous hands

slain two vassals of one Robert de Nevers; that he then most indecently and criminally robbed their dead bodies, and was so found in the act; that after an appeal to God in judicial combat, in which he was the victor, he, taking advantage of the hospitality of your castle and the confidence that you placed in him, added yet to his crime by stealing from you one hundred sous. Will your lordship have the great kindness to assure me of the truth or falsity of these serious accusations, and greatly oblige yours in truth and equity? I hold the one hundred sous at your disposal, and if he has taken them without your consent I will send him back with them to you, to suffer whatever you may think best to inflict upon him.

"In the deepest humility and shame, I am yours in sorrow,

"(Signed,)

ETIENNE."

To write to the abbot was altogether a more difficult thing. From what Hugues had said of the Lord of Solignac, it was thought that the lord would instantly avow the innocence of Hugues and bring his accusers to justice; but the letter to the abbot took some deep thinking and much time to compose.

"TO THE REVEREND AND GREATLY HONORED ABBOT OF SOLIGNAC, GREETING: Your fellow but humble brother in the faith has received with untold sorrow and heartaches your letter, and notes with many tears its contents. I would say that Hugues has conducted himself always, since he has been under the monastic vows, with great care, living constantly in prayer and fasting. The things reported seem to me to be incredible, from what I have seen with my own eyes. His soul is full of tenderness and love, and he would not harm a

single creature for his life. Though I do not wish to convey the slightest idea that your good brothers have been false, yet is there not a possibility of their being mistaken? Have they not taken Hugues for another, who might be dressed in the monkish garb? If they persist in their testimony, then I shall be compelled to call a council before the Bishop of Limoges, or some high, holy, and unprejudiced party, and there let the usual tests be applied to prove the truth. As for Hugues, he denies absolutely the things of which he is accused in the most solemn way and on the most sacred relics. I feel that it would be a sin to convict him without a trial, and therefore ask you to unite with me in endeavoring to search out the truth, so that the guilty may be punished or the innocent vindicated; lest peradventure we bring the wrath of the just God down upon us by condemning the innocent or freeing the guilty. With many prayers for yourself and the good of your most excellent order, I am now and ever,

“Your most sorrowful brother,

“(Signed,)

ETIENNE.”

These two letters were sealed with the sign of the cross and sent by a special messenger to Solignac. The messenger was duly charged to hasten, and was soon on his way to the place where Hugues had suffered so greatly. The man sent on this service belonged to what were known as the lay monks, being engaged in the secular work and not compelled to attend as many services as the regular monks. He started off, and when near Solignac was met, as by accident, by a number of Benedictines, who gave him most cordial greetings and invited him to unite with them in a service, which he did. Then he was urged to refresh himself with some wine, and this he at first refused to do, but after

a little urging, and as wine was not entirely prohibited by Etienne, he drank. The wine had a strong sleeping potion in it, and it was not long before the messenger was sleeping soundly. The Benedictines took the letters from him, and, destroying the one to the Lord of Solignac and writing another to suit their purpose, they hastily read and answered the note addressed to their abbot. When these were ready, they aroused the sleeping messenger, who began to fumble around for the letters. The Benedictines said, "What are you searching for, brother?" and he answered, "My master, Etienne, delivered to me two letters, one for the Lord of Solignac and the other for the abbot, and now, alas, I cannot find them." They began to aid him in the search. After awhile another monk joined them and asked the cause of their search, and was told of the lost letters.

"Ah!" said he. "As I was passing on my way to the chapel, I found two letters, one for the Lord of Solignac and the other for his highness the abbot. I carried them both to the persons addressed and saw them break the seals of their respective letters. Furthermore, I am now in search of the messenger, to deliver to him the answers, for each one has written a reply."

"Praise the Virgin!" said the poor messenger. "I am the one, and I feared that my slothful sleep had made me forget my mission and lose the writings confided to my care."

"Fear not," said the monks; "the Virgin cares for those who are as faithful to her as you, and now rest here to-night and in the morning return."

The poor man accepted their hospitality. The show and pretensions of the Benedictines pleased him. He thought that he was in a veritable company of angels. They inquired carefully after Hugues, and regretted his

sickness, and asked if he were fully recovered and how Etienne was, and by a series of ingenious questions they managed to worm out of the dupe all that they wished to know. They found that Hugues was much better, that his recovery was not complete, that he was still weak, but that he was regaining rapidly the health that he had lost. They also discovered how closely Etienne and the enemy were bound together; but the man knew nothing of what had taken place, and therefore could not tell anything.

No one but Hugues and Etienne knew the story, and it was not the purpose of either to tell anything. Well was it that the messenger knew nothing that would reflect on either, for he would have told it all unconsciously to his shrewd questioners, who under the guise of friendly interest and with words of great admiration for the holiness and piety of Hugues and his master had gained the confidence and heart of the poor fellow, who thought that all the time he was adding glory to his friends.

After forcing the man to eat a sumptuous meal, they started him on his return early the next morning. He did not reach Ambazac before sunset, and darkness had already settled on the mountains of Grandmont when, tired with his long journey, he stood before the cell of Etienne and delivered the letters to his master and received the blessing he sought.

Hugues was called immediately, and before the seals were broken examined the letters. "Ah!" said he. "I cannot read, but the same hand has folded both of these, the crest of the lord is wanting, and the cross of the abbot is on them both." This was an oversight of the monks, who in their haste had overlooked the fact that if they employed the lord's name they must use his crest.

"Let us look at the inside now," said Etienne, who would never have been suspicious enough to have examined the seals or thought of forgery. That to him would have been an unheard-of crime; but though Hugues could not read, his eyes had been trained to note little things, and, like the Indian, whose instinct seems to teach him all about game and who discerns tracks and marks where ordinary persons would see nothing, Hugues's discernment and careful attention revealed the fact that the crest was wanting. Now that Etienne's attention was called to it, he saw that both letters were written by the same hand; yet his righteous soul revolted at the thought that there could be such degradation and sin, that, to carry out an evil purpose, men who made such profession of holiness as the Benedictines could be capable of forgery. He therefore dismissed the thought from his mind and said, "It is impossible."

"Let us not condemn them before we have heard what they have to say," said Etienne, who in his great kindness was always seeking for a cloak of charity to cover up the sins of his enemies, thinking that by so doing he was pleasing heaven.

If there was one thing he did not wish to be, it was to be unjust, and the fear of that often led him to the very opposite extreme of inventing an excuse for those who had none.

After a short exhortation to Hugues to err always on the side of charity, he tore off the seals and unfolded the letter of the abbot, and began to read the following:

"TO ETIENNE, DEARLY BELOVED, GREETING: Most reverend and holy brother. Since we dispatched our first letter to you, we have given our souls no rest. Night and day have been spent in prayers and fastings, seeking to find some way to excuse and overlook the

crimes committed by that man who is called Hugues, and who is received everywhere because he is one of your disciples. The great love and reverence that we have for you, besides the well-merited reputation that you have for purity of life and superior holiness, made us hesitate long before declaring the unpleasant facts that we would have torn our hearts out sooner than have revealed, but that the holy name that you have won and the Church we love be not scandalized, we were forced to point out this Judas in your fold. Your answer has been received, and we see how terrible the revelation is to your sweet nature; but we have examined the monks who gave the testimony, and they are now half dead with long fastings and with the great agony they have experienced in being compelled to bear such unpleasant testimony against one for whom we have had so high a regard, and most especially for you, whom we all think the purest and best of mortals on the earth. We are not astonished that so old a criminal should blind your pure eyes with his lies. Indeed, every day brings us some fresh proof of his villainies, and now a score of monks are willing to testify against him. The proof that you suggest would be very wise and excellent were it just a question between Hugues and one of our monks; but you will certainly admit that, where a score of good and true brother Christians, who are under the same solemn oaths as ourselves, after long fasting and prayer with tears declare these things, their hearts being racked by the deeds committed by this monster, such a trial would be useless, increasing your agony, as well as our own, although we do not count ourselves as worthy to be compared with you. What seems to us the wisest thing is to send Hugues securely bound to the Lord of Solignac, whom he has so vilely treated, and let him administer

such justice as the secular law may demand. We freely pardon Hugues for all the great injuries he has done against us and pray that God will cleanse his guilty soul, for surely there is not a more guilty one now in purgatory than abides under your protection in the person of Hugues de Lacerta. With our most fraternal greeting, we most humbly bow at the feet of your superior holiness.

“(Signed,)

ABBOT OF SOLIGNAC.”

“May God forgive them ! May God forgive them !” repeated Hugues and Etienne in the same breath.

“O, I am faint !” said Etienne. “How can such wickedness be allowed to exist ? Has the devil taken possession of men, as he did when the Blessed Word was here in the flesh ?”

Hugues sat silent, but kept repeating, “May God forgive them ! May God forgive them !” Then, arousing as from a dream, he said : “Father, you have not read the other letter ; but I assure you that it is not from the Lord of Solignac, for it has not his crest. The lord spares not the ink when he writes. I have seen his writing to titles, and know it well.”

“Hush !” said Etienne. “You know not but he may have requested some one to write for him, and there may be a full acquittal from all accusations. Let us cross ourselves and see.” So saying, he broke the seal and began to read :

“TO THE HOLY AND BELOVED ETIENNE : I confess myself unworthy of the honor of writing an epistle to you ; but, as you have made a request, I shall not delay complying with it, sad as it may be not only for me, but for yourself. Know then that there was found on my premises one of your followers (most unworthy disciple

of so holy a master), a man in a monk's habit. He was discovered in the very act of searching the bodies of two poor victims whom he had killed. He was brought to me by one Robert de Nevers, a valiant and faithful knight of whom you must have heard, for his name is well known throughout this part of the land for bravery and holy living. This good knight came to me and declared what he had caught the said Hugues doing. I would have made the villain at once mount the gallows, but he denied so vehemently, and as a knight appealed to judicial combat, which I was loth to allow, but owing to the fact that he had been knighted, I was forced by the laws of our common knighthood to yield ; and when the battle took place he, being a superior swordsman, took advantage of the weakness of his adversary and slew him. I was thereupon forced against my will to set him free, but imagine my surprise, after giving him for your sake the hospitality of the castle, to find that he had run away from the house in the night and taken from my treasure one hundred sous that I had reserved for the pious monks of Solignac. If, therefore, the rascal has given the same to your keeping, I will send two of these monks, who will receive the money from your holy hand. Concerning this Hugues, I commend you to send him to me securely bound, and I will judge him by the laws of the land. I know that it would be a severe trial for your righteous soul to sit in judgment upon him, but send him bound to me as I have said, and you need fear no more. Only I assure your holiness that the land will not much longer be cursed with such a vile reprobate. Assuring you of my high esteem, and holding myself always honored by commands from you, I am, as ever,

“Your most humble servant,

“LORD OF SOLIGNAC.”

"There !" exclaimed Hugues. "That is just what I expected when I saw the cross on the seal. The Lord of Solignac knows too well Hugues de Lacerta to write such a thing, and he never could have written what he has about Robert de Nevers ; and that sending for the money is all a fraud to obtain what was truly given to you, my father."

"I do not doubt it. I know that you speak the truth, my son," said Etienne ; "but how shall we be able to meet these false accusers ? Our blessed Lord himself was condemned by false witnesses ; Paul, his holy apostle, was surrounded by hosts who testified untruths against him at Jerusalem and Rome ; and you, my poor son, are another victim. But fear not, he who stood by Paul on that night when his ship was wrecked will stand by you, and you shall come out of this with glory and honor for our dear Lord." And Etienne threw his arms around Hugues and kissed him tenderly.

Now that Etienne was fully awake to the infamy of the Benedictines, his great nature was all alert. He saw clearly the whole deceitful plot and was preparing his best to meet it. They sat and talked until the midnight bell rang out the call to prayers ; then they both arose and went into the common meeting place, Etienne giving the unneeded advice to Hugues to speak to no one about the matter.

After prayers all retired, Etienne to his pallet and Hugues to his, but neither to close his eyes. It would be difficult to say which was the more worried, the master or the disciple. The latter had no fear, and would willingly have started off at that very hour to face the enemy on his own field, but Etienne would not hear of it. Great sorrow filled his heart because so much grief had been brought to his dear master, and he recalled again and again every incident of his behavior, and

could find nothing that he had failed to repeat in his confession. O, that sleepless night ! How many thousand times he prayed and called on the Virgin, saints, and Trinity to help him !

How slow the sun is in rising when eyes are straining for him, and how weary and wretched the head feels after such nights as these ! So felt both master and monk, but still they made their regular appearance among their fellows, and it was not noticed. The whole brotherhood had confidence in Etienne and Hugues.

Now, it had occurred to Etienne to call that messenger and find out all the details, but he had been sent off on another mission, and so Etienne had to wait. Had he succeeded, had he been able to see that servant and find out that he had really seen neither the lord nor the abbot he might have acted differently. What was to be done now ? Everything was in confusion over the prospective wedding of the young Lord of Cocu with the daughter of the Vicomte de Limoges. All of the dignitaries would be at both places on the occasion, and Etienne sought to cheer Hugues by saying, " Surely the Lord of Solignac will come here. Let us pray over it and trust that God will vindicate his own."

CHAPTER XIII.

A MEDIÆVAL MARRIAGE.

FROM the time that Adam awoke from that deep sleep and found the sweetest reality at his side that a man can find, namely, a real helpmeet, whose blood and bone are a part of his own being, down through all time to the present day, never has there been a time when a wedding, the union of a man with a woman in the God-ordained institution of matrimony, has not called forth all the better feelings in humanity to make the time memorable by happiness and pleasure.

In the Limousin district no exception was found to this rule of humanity, and when the wedding of the young Lord of Cocu with the daughter of the Vicomte de Limoges was announced, the gossips and long tongues of the day had enough to talk about until the event took place.

When the eventful day arrived, it was a regular holiday for the whole region. Fashion, which played as active a part eight hundred years ago as it does to-day, made many brush up and fix over old robes to look like new, and those who could bought new ones. The newest designs in hairdressing were sought after, and all the latest modes of external decoration.

The wedding was to take place, of course, at Limoges. All of the lords and ladies for a long distance were invited, and processions on horseback might be seen coming from Laurière, Dorat, Uzerche, Chalus, and Solignac. Bright colors and shining armor served to make the

scene attractive, and the peasants walked along the highway and scampered to one side as the lords and ladies rode by. It was thought that never had there been a finer display in the Limousin. The vicomte intended to make as much of the occasion as possible, as he desired to show to the world his hospitality; and, as he had several other daughters whom he wished to marry off, nothing was spared in the outlay to make the wedding feast most memorable.

The religious ceremonies, of course, took place at the cathedral, the bishop himself officiating, and the acolytes and singers each sought to outvie the other in the discharge of their respective duties. Banners, crests, plumes, and all the insignia of nobility were there displayed to great advantage. The bride and her maidens had spent many an hour on the trousseau. Needlework and drawnwork and darning in of beautiful designs were used in decorating the bridal gown, which was confined by a jeweled stomacher. Rich tapestries were laid for the bride to walk upon from the altar to the sedan chair which was to carry her to the castle. The happy bridegroom was dressed in a splendid suit, which glittered and shone with jewels and emblazonments.

The dinner was served in the great hall of the castle. Many a time before had the old walls resounded with the sounds of merriment. Often had the gentry of the center of France gathered there on different occasions, but never had there been a gayer assemblage than this now gathered at the vicomte's magnificent board. Difficult indeed is the task of describing that wedding dinner. At this period the order of serving food was not reduced to the science of to-day. The manners partook more of the field and the solitude of the castle, and did not help to give to the inmates that sense of propriety that is sure

to come from association and contact with the higher classes of mankind. Had one of our readers been among the guests at the vicomte's table, he would have looked in vain for many of the dishes so common to-day (for instance, potatoes were as yet unknown in Europe) ; also he would find no coffee, tea, or chocolate, nor cigars after the meal. Brandy, champagne, liqueurs, etc., were not used, but white and red wines flowed in great abundance during the feast.

But the serving of the meal itself was probably the most interesting feature of all. Fish were plentiful and large, mostly broiled and served whole on metal platters. Oxen, sheep, and pigs were roasted whole, and the savory odors filled the whole building. Whenever a fancy dish was served, as, for instance, a wild boar, it was brought to the table whole on a trencher, and carried by several cooks dressed in costume. Even the bristles were replaced in the cooked flesh, to give it the appearance of life. Preceding the cooks came buffoons, or court fools, or clowns, who would make diverting speeches for the company. Then there were surprise dishes, accompanied by little peasant maidens, who sang some ditty or danced for the pleasure of the guests. When the great pies were opened, perhaps a number of imprisoned birds would fly out, a small pond in which live fish were swimming would be exposed, a live hare might bound off, or wriggling eels might escape.

There was no want of eatables, however, and the fun grew fast and furious as the wines were drunk. A fermented drink, in which honey was one of the ingredients, proved intoxicating enough to serve for a modern diplomatic dinner.

The feasting continued for three days at the castle at Limoges ; then the bride and groom invited all the guests

to their new home, where another three days had to be spent in festivities.

Among the most officious at the castle of Cocu was the well-known Lord of Laurière with his lady, who was once the mistress of the home over which the new bride was henceforth to preside. The old people tried to be the youngest of the company. The gallant lord especially had more soft nonsense to say to the feminine part of the gathering than any other of the guests, and called his bride "my honeycomb." Indeed, the affection that he lavished was the wonder of the people and the admiration of the ladies, who pointed to him as a model husband. Lady Dorat remarked to her husband, "My lord, do you see how the Lady of Laurière is simply adored by her husband, while many of us can hardly have a word from our lords."

"Yes, yes," answered the lord; "but you must remember that this is Laurière's second wife. He never called his first 'my honeycomb.' When we get our second wives, we may be just as sweet on them."

It was also very noticeable that the elder bride and groom advised the younger to be careful of the larder. The wine was measured out very sparingly, and the reckless waste seen at the marriage of the old folks was not allowed. It would seem that they had completely changed in their ideas, especially Madame Laurière, who was heard to remark: "It is a great deal more wholesome to drink the wine of last year's vintage than old wine. It is much less apt to give a headache, and the bad taste will be sure to keep one from drinking too much." The eating of much meat would certainly produce the plague, and it would be necessary to let an ounce of blood for every pound of meat eaten. If one wished long life and happiness, it was best to eat every day for dinner little else besides dandelion salad, bread,

and milk. These observations were only made now at the Cocu castle. At the vicomte's it was noticed that the capacity of the Madame Laurière to consume the meats, dainties, and oldest wines was unlimited. It was the occasion of much remark among the guests.

The mother-in-law also attempted to give her daughter-in-law some lessons about the training of a Cocu. "He just takes after his father," she said. "Mind you, now, the Cocus always have their own way. It is no use trying to oppose them. You will find yourself locked in the castle if you do, and your husband may be gone for a month. If he wants to go to bed with his armor on, you must tell him that it is the proper thing to do. If he sends off or exchanges your maid for a dog, do not chide him, or like as not he will give you nothing but menservants in the house. If he wants his dogs kenneled in your boudoir, be sure and pet them all, or he may keep them there."

How much more she might have said to involve the good name of Cocu is not known, had not one of the inmates of the Laurière family remarked in a voice loud enough to be heard over the whole hall, "That is the way things go on up at Laurière now, is it?" Meanwhile the lord of the last-named place advanced and said, "Come, my honeycomb; let us take a walk over the grounds familiar to your youth." The dame offered no resistance, but arose and went forth. As she left the room, a clown was unkind enough to remark that "the bees had not all gotten out of some of the honeycomb yet." This made a laugh, and the new bride was very glad to escape the vexatious remarks of her mother-in-law, content, as are all young brides, to find out for herself the failings of her lord in the hard highway of life.

In spite of all that the old folks could do, everything

was most skillfully and carefully prepared, and the guests were entertained as became the dignity of the house of Cocu. At such times as this, when festivities were enjoyed, a general rejoicing was had among the poorer classes. Numerous weddings were arranged to take place at the same time, so that the good time might be enjoyed by all. No less than four weddings among the peasantry came off at the nuptials of Lord Cocu.

To the horde of servants were allowed the remnants of the dishes, the heads and entrails of the animals, the heads and skins of eels, heads and feathers of the birds, broken victuals, and many little odds and ends that gave to these poor wretches for once in their lives a full stomach and what they called a good time. These, like little ships, followed close to the great, so as to enjoy their convoy. While sheepskin and fustian for the most part were the coverings of the humbler part of the population, and though with bare feet or wooden shoes they danced, they had just as much happiness and just as much pleasure in their way as did their masters and mistresses in the castle, with all their fine fixings and tapestries.

Innumerable games diverted the guests. Races in sacks, climbing a greased pole, catching a greased pig, feats of strength, hawking parties, tournaments, and all games and diversions known at that time were employed to please and amuse a company.

In the midst of all this gayety the monks of Grandmont were not forgotten. Large portions of the meats were sent to the "good men," as they were called; but Etienne and Hugues would not taste a morsel of the dainties. Their hearts were too full of sadness and woe. All appetite was gone as they remembered how their own good name was at stake and perhaps ruined through the duplicity and sin of a brotherhood of monks.

CHAPTER XIV.

SOLIGNAC AT GRANDMONT.

THESE were indeed gloomy days at Grandmont. But they were not alone in sorrow. The gay times of the last week had been participated in by the Lord of Solignac with but little heart. His mind had been on Hugues and Etienne. The third day of the feast this lord excused himself from the hunt and took an opportunity to visit Etienne, of whom he had heard so much. At the same time he wished to pay his respects to Hugues, whose actions at his castle had won his highest esteem. So, mounting his horse, he rode down the hill and over the mountain.

The morning was beautiful, and he could not help turning in his saddle now and then to note how the great hills rolled like a troubled mass and how the summits were crowned with the red heather, making a picture pleasing to the eye and ever varying as the undulations changed.

His good horse brought him to the monastery, which at that period comprised only a few cells and a rude chapel. Dismounting he entered the building, where the monks were at this time celebrating the Office of the Virgin. He joined the assembly and knelt with them. The spirit of the meeting seemed to take hold of him also, and he could not fail to note the difference between them and the Benedictines. After the service was over, he hastened to Hugues and congratulated him on his recovery, and greeted him in such a way as at once bewildered the poor man. Etienne asked them both to his cell—a very

rare thing, for Etienne hardly ever took a stranger to his little, rough, undecorated hole in the rocks that he had for his abiding place. But this was a very important matter, and there was much that he did not want the others to know. So, when they were there assembled, Etienne said, "My lord, I was pained beyond measure at the letter I received in your name, and I hope that before this you have received the one hundred sous that I sent back to you by the hands of two of the monks whom you sent for them."

"My father, you speak in riddles," answered Solignac. "Samson gave out riddles when he wished to destroy the Philistines, I have heard; but I hope that my holy father does not wish to destroy me."

"Far from it, I wish you all peace and happiness," answered the abbot; "but I wish to set myself right and have you see my son Hugues in his true light, for I assure you that he is not the person that your letter would make him out to be. There must be a grievous mistake somewhere."

"What mean you by my letter?" answered Solignac; "and why do you say you hope I received back the one hundred sous? Did you count me unworthy to make you such a little gift as that?" said the lord, with considerable irritation.

"No, my lord," said Etienne; "I received with great pleasure your gift, but when a couple of messengers came from you, and I had a letter in your name saying that the money was stolen, I straightway restored it, and I only now ask of you to clear the character of my faithful brother Hugues of all the imputations that have been thrown upon it."

"My dear and holy father, please explain yourself. I do not understand anything of what you speak. As for my friend Hugues de Lacerta, there is no man that I

honor more ; and his noble and heroic actions at my castle have won him the regard of every true man, for he acted not only as a brave knight, but as a true Christian ; and I have come to honor him to-day, if my feeble powers can add any glory to a man who has made himself so great as the former Lord of Chalus."

"Then," said Etienne, "he did not willfully murder two innocent vassals of the late Lord Robert de Nevers, and was not found in the act of robbing their dead bodies?"

The Lord of Solignac looked aghast, and then said : "No, a thousand times no. That false and fickle child of the father of lies started that story to save his own hide and get the money that the Lord of Montbrun had given him for you ; but before the wicked knight perished righteously on the gallows, he confessed all, and the man Hugues is as innocent as an angel of light or the babe just born."

"It is well," said Etienne ; "but how about the one hundred sous ? Did he take them by stealth without your consent ?"

"No ; that was impossible," replied the lord. "I offered them first to him as a recompense for the sufferings that he had undergone, but he would not even look at them, and it was only after much urging that I made him receive them for your holiness ; then he took the money. Now," continued the Lord of Solignac, "I feel it my duty and my privilege to demand why these questions have been asked of me, and why so good and holy a man as Hugues, whose life is as changed as the man out of whom Christ cast the legion of devils, has been so maligned and ill treated ?"

"You have a perfect right to know," responded Etienne ; "and I feel it my duty to inform you of all that has transpired." Then he began with the story of how he

had sent Hugues to the Lord of Montbrun, how the money had been given, and how the affair with the vassals on the way back had occurred. "From that time until he left your domain you know the story better than I."

"Yes," answered the excited lord, "I know that never have I seen a braver or more heroic knight in armor, or a more faithful Christian with a cross, than this same Hugues."

Then Etienne related the long and terrible sickness of the monk, his wild delirium, and the confession after he came to himself. "Three days after Hugues returned to the monastery, while he was still raging with fever, I received this letter ;" and he produced the first letter of the Abbot of Solignac.

The lord took the letter and read it over. When he reached the part where were the accusations against Hugues, he ground his teeth, drew his sword half way out of its sheath, and drove it back again as if he were stabbing his deadliest foe. Having reread it, he handed it back to Etienne and said : "It is a bundle of infernal lies ; it is nothing but falsehood. The Benedictines have been so jealous because I have spoken in your praise and honored Hugues that they have concocted this villainy for your destruction, but I will force this down their lying throats with the point of my sword ;" and the enraged lord began to rage around the cell of Etienne and pour out oaths, every minute asking pardon for saying what he did say, and then in the very next breath repeating what he had said a moment before.

Etienne was shocked at his rage, for he had seen little of the world, and the impressions that he had received while a youth were early lost in the long years of prayer and penitence that he had since spent in solitude, contemplation, and fasting. He could not imagine that

it was possible for a man to be in such a fury, but the Lord of Solignac was as a summer breeze to what Hugues had been only a few months before. Now, as he quietly sat there, he resembled the man to whom the angry lord had likened him only a little while before, namely, "the man out of whom the blessed Lord had cast a legion of devils;" for he was as gentle and as patient as a lamb, and a look of rebuke from Etienne would be more terrible to him now than an army of opponents before.

Etienne quieted the master of Solignac and made him promise to do nothing violent before hearing the other letters. First he read the letter to the abbot. That so added to his anger that he shook with temper, and kept crying out, "O, the villains! O; the perjurers! O, what hypocrites!" and many such appellatives. "Now," said Etienne, "I have here another letter that I wish you to hear calmly and say whether it is true." Then he began to read the letter purporting to come from the lord himself. As he continued, the man whose name was forged became livid with anger. His ideas of the Benedictines had not been as high as they might have been, but now he thought them worse than fiends. He had great difficulty to restrain himself from loud outbursts of profanity and anger. Never since Etienne had made those rocks his habitation had they resounded with so much wrath and swearing. The enraged master of Solignac said that he would drive every Benedictine from his domain; that he would appeal directly to the Bishop of Limoges, and, if necessary, go to Rome himself to have the charters immediately withdrawn, and vowed death to all the guilty.

Etienne said: "May God forgive these, who, like Judas, have sought to betray innocent blood; but, my lord, it is contrary to the laws of God and man that anybody should be condemned without having a trial. There

may be some very innocent and godly persons among those whom you in anger would sweep away with the besom of destruction. I cannot admire your ungovernable passion. Righteous indignation is allowed, but I pray thee let not the sun go down upon thy wrath. I would much rather be in Hugues's place than in that of the guilty ones. It is better to be sinned against than to sin."

With many other words he attempted to assuage the wrath of the Lord of Solignac, and finally extorted from him a promise that he would do nothing by himself, but would have all done in the presence of the Bishop of Limoges, to whom the Benedictines were subject. After joining with the monks at a service of the dead, the lord was about to depart, when a thing that he had forgotten crossed his mind, and, going again to the cell of Etienne, he said, "Pardon me, my father; but I have omitted to ask about the money. In my anger I have lost what you said about two messengers from me asking for it."

Etienne, fearing that he might be aroused to greater anger, dismissed him by saying that he would tell him the next morning after the sunrise mass. This satisfied Solignac, who went away planning in his own mind how he should bring the rascals to justice.

CHAPTER XV.

THE HUNDRED SOUS.

THE Benedictines were greatly aroused by the gift to Etienne and by what they deemed the intrusion into their section. To add to their vindictiveness was the fact that the Lord of Solignac, together with the nobility around, felt specially drawn to the austere lives of the mountain hermits. The high rank of Etienne and the adherence of Hugues, whose conversion was so apparent that no one could deny it, all combined to give the public a very just and lofty idea of the piety of the men of Grandmont. The Lord of Solignac had helped to kindle these fires of jealousy by declaring in the most public places the holiness of the monks of Grandmont, and especially Hugues, whose conduct he held up before the Benedictines as the quintessence of nobility and Christianity. This continual sounding of the praises of those whom the monks considered as rivals—for the Benedictines were established long before Etienne was born—fanned the fires of envy and jealousy into flames, which were only seeking a vent to break forth into fury.

To do justice to the Benedictines, it is but fair to say that many of them had no ill feelings in their hearts toward the men of Grandmont. The abbot had never read a word about the matter, and the letters he signed he thought contained only words of commendation. The Italian brother, Jaco, had been at the root of all of the difficulty. His logic, as before given, had created the sentiment that the Benedictines were the wronged party. His hand had penned the letters, and he had

fired several others with bitterness toward the brothers at Grandmont. Eager to get that one hundred sous given by his lord, he had dispatched two monks with the following letter to Etienne the next day after the messenger of Etienne returned with the forged letter :

“TO OUR DEARLY BELOVED AND HOLY ETIENNE :
The letter from your sacred hand that we have received has only made us know more certainly that the reports we have heard of your holiness are in no way exaggerated, but fail to do you justice. We send by the hand of our two faithful brethren this letter to assure you of our deep sympathy for you in being made the victim of such an archfiend as Hugues de Lacerta. But grieve not, beloved ; the blessed Lord had a Judas in his camp, and it is possible that even so holy a man as you can be deceived by such a wretch. But as the holy Evangelist said of the archtraitor, so can you say of him, ‘He will go to his own place. God have mercy on his wretched soul!’ In the meantime these worthy brothers will receive from you the money that the robber stole from the Lord of Solignac, who has asked us to present this note to you. With the deepest sorrow and most fraternal greeting,

“We remain yours devoutly,

“ABBOT OF SOLIGNAC.”

Two mornings after the return of Etienne’s messenger the two monks appeared at Grandmont bearing this and a special note, which said : “Desiring that no one might know the scandal that has been done, lest ‘the daughters of the uncircumcised may rejoice,’ we have not told anyone of the sorrow that has befallen both us and you ; therefore be pleased to say nothing to these innocents about the affair, as they have no intimation

from us of the crime which we most sincerely deplore and wish to hush up as soon as the guilty one has been put out of the way."

Etienne said nothing, but brought out the one hundred sous and gave them into the hands of the monks, from whom he took a receipt. He gave the money in the presence of the whole chapter, and no one knew why or wherefore except Hugues and the master. The two visitors sought to be very agreeable. They inquired particularly after the health of Etienne, and they joined in several of the services with great energy, chanting louder than all of the other monks and making the genuflections and signs in the most approved manner. They were very particular to note all about Hugues, sought his company, endeavoring to draw him out in conversation and seeking to know all about his sickness. But Hugues was reticent and had almost nothing to say, retreating to his own cell and spending the time there in praying that the sins of the guilty might be pardoned.

After vain attempts to get information from several others the two, bearing the price of lies and of blood, started on their return. This was several days before the wedding, and the news of the coming festivities, with the hope that the Lord of Solignac would come, made Hugues and his abbot willing to wait. Etienne's favorite theme in conversing with Hugues was on the wonderful providence of God. "There is nothing that can happen without God's will. The little sparrow that dies in the stinging cold or the tender birdling that is crowded out of its nest and tumbles to the earth unfledged falls because in some way God permits it. God dwells in a light so intense that human eyes cannot penetrate it; and as when you see the sun in steady gaze for a while your eyes are darkened with tears, so

when you look at God you see 'clouds and darkness round about him,' but remember that 'righteousness and judgment are the habitation of his throne.' He may take John to Patmos in the prisons of the tyrant as a quarry slave, but he will reveal unto him the glories of the blessed ; he will make him see what eye hath not seen nor mind conceived. Who would not sooner be on Patmos, with the iron chain clanking around the feet, the overseer's whip now and then drawing blood from the back, and be 'in the spirit on the Lord's day,' and see the Son of man, and listen to the celestial music, and stand before the great white throne with the elect and the elders—who, I say, would not be willing to have the one and the other? So, my beloved Hugues, the clouds and darkness will be but the entrance into the invisible glory of God, and you are walking in the very footsteps of the holy martyrs. Paul speaks of the shipwrecks, stoning, stripes, and imprisonment ; yet in the glorious end he will bring thee forth like the gold tried in the furnace heated seven times. Though it be by the powers of evil, yet will it make the pure gold shine with the more brilliant luster."

Hugues listened to these words and drank them in as from the very fountain of inspiration. The effect that they had upon his mind was to make him wish for greater hardships. His only regret was that he alone could not be tortured. He did not want to have the good life of Etienne clouded with anxiety, but that he could not help.

The gathering on the hill where the castle of Cocu was situated that evening was brilliant. Around the table, laden with the spoils of the day's sport, were gathered a host of the gentry of central France. The enjoyment was great. Buffoons were there, who performed for the amusement of the company. Jugglers acted and showed

off their tricks. Even some troubadours were present, who vied with each other in singing their best songs and rattling off extempore verses to the ladies of the company. But the Lord of Solignac sat in silence. He had no heart for the merriment of the hour. There was no fun for him in the jests and no interest in the strange tricks. He sat like one absorbed and preoccupied. Frequently during the evening did his fellows chaff him by asking if he had seen a nymph or if he were suffering, but to all he gave a good humored answer that satisfied them and soon sought his own couch.

The Lord of Solignac took leave of his host the night before, as he said that he had an engagement at a distance by sunrise; so the order was given to raise the portcullis and lower the drawbridge at the visitor's bidding. After a restless night as the first gleam of gray came through the little narrow slot in the castle wall that at the same time served for a window and a place from which arrows could be shot at an attacking enemy, Lord Solignac arose, hastily dressed himself, and descended to the court. There he found his charger all ready, and, throwing a handful of small coins to the servants, he started out.

It was but a short ride, and he reached the monastery just as the sun was rising. Fastening his horse, he went into the apocryphal chapel, and there joined the brothers in their devotions. After this he went to the cell of Etienne and found that Hugues and his master were waiting for him. Before speaking they all three knelt in silent prayer for several minutes, and then Etienne turned to his visitor and said, "Good morning, my lord. I trust that you have had a pleasant night."

"Thanks, holy father," replied Solignac. "My pillow was made of pointed rocks that gave no resting place ;

but pardon me, I pray thee, as I am in great haste to bring this matter to an end, and therefore beg of you to tell me what you promised at our parting yesternight."

"I will, my lord, but remember that the promise of doing nothing violent is still binding upon you, and that what you do will be done only with the approval the Bishop of Limoges."

"I promise," said Solignac, bowing his head and assuming a waiting and attentive attitude, which Etienne rightly interpreted as a motion to proceed. Lifting up some pine boughs that formed his pallet over the stone bed, he brought out the hypocritical letter from the abbot, with the deceitful postscript, in which the crime was again alleged to have been committed by Hugues, at the same time asking for the money which had been sent to Etienne.

Solignac was dumbfounded at the audacity, theft, and insolence. Then he gasped out, "And did you give the scoundrels the money?"

"Why, certainly," said Etienne. "I would not keep for a second what a person thought was theirs, and I have their receipt for the same."

"Show it to me," cried Solignac, and Etienne produced the paper signed by the two monks with the sign of the cross. Then, taking the letters, he said: "Only the signature of these letters is by the abbot. That relieves me somewhat, as I think he is a good man, though he gives little heed to his monastery." He was a younger son given over to monastic orders because his father's estate was not to be divided, and that seemed to be about the only thing to do with him. He entered that kind of life as a trade, and was content to eat and drink and say his prayers, wishing to be left undisturbed as much as possible. Around him a clique had formed who knew his moods and weaknesses, and under such a skillful

maneuverer as Jaco he was only a tool. Solignac knew this and tried to arouse him, but in vain. The abbot of the Benedictines was under the control of his monks, and it was easier to remain in that condition than to break the gyves. He disliked trouble and believed the Benedictines more than the lord; so, while he assented to the lord, he followed the advice of his fellows.

The thing that puzzled the mind of Solignac was that the signatures of the receipt, "Benoit" and "Zaccheus," were not the names of any persons of whom he had ever heard, and he thought that he was familiar with every monk, since all their names had to appear on his list, as he was accustomed to allow them so much per capita for every one in the order. Having a list with him, he looked it over and called upon Etienne to examine it, but the signers were not mentioned, and no such names could possibly be found. Then a careful description of them was given him. Hugues said that he recognized them as the two that confessed Judas as he was about to be hung.

"But their names were Alexandres and Julius," said Lord Solignac.

"I do not know the names of them, but, as I shook Judas to make him drop the dagger, both of these rushed at me, and one has a blear in the right eye, while the other has a scar, as if made by a sword cut, over the left cheek."

"Yes," said Lord Solignac, "that is a good description of Alexandres and Julius; but why do they give false names here?"

"That I cannot tell," replied Etienne, "but hope it will all come out right some way, that the Benedictines may be cleared of all guilt, and that whoever is guilty may seek forgiveness and be pardoned. I am content as long as my dear brother Hugues is proven innocent, as he is by you, my lord."

"Yes, he is as innocent as one can be ; but what shall be done with the guilty, who have sought his blood, stained his good name, forged my name, and stolen the money that was sent to you ? "

"I pardon them all that they have done to me," said Etienne.

"And I forgive all their villainies against me," said Hugues.

"But I hold you both as witnesses. Know you not that to compound a crime is to aid the criminal ? " said Lord Solignac, severely, "and it is as much your duty to guard your good name and that of your brother Hugues as it is to merit that good name by holy living."

Etienne said he was not accustomed to look on the law that way, but the logic was all on the side of Solignac, and Etienne at last consented to allow the letters to be used in testimony and to permit Hugues to testify before the Bishop of Limoges at the trial.

The lord then hastily bade farewell to Etienne, receiving his blessing, and, giving Hugues's hand a hearty grasp, mounted his horse and was off for Limoges to see the bishop.

CHAPTER XVI.

SOLIGNAC MEETS HIS BISHOP.

AT Solignac among the Benedictines there was quite a bustle when it was heard that the lord had gone to the wedding of the young Lord Cocu. It had been his custom always to take with him a couple of these monks whenever he started on such a trip, but now he went alone. Lady Solignac was too ill to leave the castle, and the lord departed accompanied only by a couple of grooms and valets. They knew well the proximity of Grandmont to the castle of Cocu, and were in fear lest the lord might see Hugues and their whole plan be discovered.

However, they formed another plot. They made a formal complaint to the Bishop of Limoges, accusing Hugues of murder, theft, hypocrisy, and being in league with the devil, and asked that Hugues be brought before him for trial. The charges were well specified and drawn up so as to leave the impression on the mind of one reading them, that they were incontrovertible.

So the Bishop of Limoges was in no pleasant mood toward Hugues or the monks of Grandmont. There had always been a little feeling against Etienne on the part of the bishop because, according to the papal bull, he was exempt from the authority of the bishop, and had the right of appealing directly to the pope himself. While the bishop could not compel either Etienne or any of his monks to appear before him, their refusing to do so would be a serious thing, and form a good ground of complaint that might be carried to the Roman see.

The idea of the Benedictines was to get this matter before a court that was prejudiced in their favor, and so have a verdict given in their interest, even if afterward the pope overruled it. This was thought to be enough to prejudice the rising monastery of Grandmont in the eyes of the nobility, and as a result the Benedictines would reap the reward. There was, however, a secret understanding that nothing should be done until the result of the letter was known.

After Lord Solignac had started for the wedding, a monk had been dispatched to keep watch and note whether he visited Grandmont or not. This detective had seen the lord go to Grandmont the first day, and, coming quite near, had heard enough of the loud talking and cursing to know that the plot was discovered and that Hugues was vindicated. Waiting for no more, he hastened to Solignac with the news.

After hearing this Jaco related a vision of the Virgin that had appeared to him in the night and bade him make a pilgrimage to Rome, but assuring him that the guilty Hugues would be brought to justice, and that the Benedictines would be greatly enriched, as all the nobles would hasten to bestow alms on them as the favored of God. Urging his fellows to continue the prosecution, he begged leave to act in accordance with his vision and start for Rome. The shrewd Italian knew well that the angry Lord of Solignac would uproot the whole plot, and that there was nothing but disgrace before them, and he took this opportunity to leave before the storm that his villainy had gathered should burst upon them. He was careful to avoid the highroad that led toward Rome, and journeyed a long way with the different parties of crusaders, so as to be lost in a multitude. In that way he avoided for a time the indignation that he had kindled against himself.

Meanwhile Solignac had arrived at the episcopal palace at Limoges. The castle and the city were two very separate institutions. In one dwelt the Vicomte de Limoges, who was master, and in the other dwelt the bishop, who was also master, and many were the wars between the two, and the narrow boundary or dividing line which separated them was often strewn with the wounded and dead of both sides. Just now there had been a peace, and the marriage of young Cocu, at which the bishop officiated, had smoothed matters over for a little while.

The Lord of Solignac himself was in good repute with the bishop, who had a fondness for the Benedictines, and especially the abbey of Solignac, which was the largest and most important under his jurisdiction. So, when he knocked at the episcopal palace gate, he received a quick and most cordial welcome from his grace and was received in a most becoming style. He was at once invited to the bishop's table, his horse was well cared for, and all was done that could be to make him both comfortable and happy.

The hospitality was welcome to the lord, who had ridden for several hours, and, as he had eaten nothing since the night before, he was ready for the good cheer that loaded the bishop's table. The conversation turned naturally on young Cocu, his fine prospects, and his pretty bride. Solignac carefully avoided any reference to the real object of his visit until after the meal. He then requested to see the bishop in private.

The bishop was just as anxious for this interview as Lord Solignac, for he wished to consult with him how best to promote the interests of the Benedictines against Etienne, as he supposed that, on account of location and of the well-known friendship and large donations that Solignac had bestowed upon the monks of his

neighborhood, all his sympathies would be with them. So they were naturally, but the lord was a just man and had a desire to act impartially, and the change that had come over Hugues made him have great confidence in the hermitage started under the direction of the Vicomte de Thiers.

Now, being alone with the bishop, he opened the conversation by saying, "My father, I wish to put to you some questions that are too difficult for me to answer."

"Speak on, my son," answered the bishop. "You have always been so good and faithful that I am sure you could not go far astray."

"Well, then," continued the lord, "be kind enough to tell me what should be done to the monks who would deliberately seek to destroy the name and fame of brother monks, who seek to rob and have actually stolen a large sum of money from others poorer than themselves, and who have added to other crimes attempts to murder?"

"O! can it be possible, can it be possible? I did not think that they had fallen so low as that," said the bishop. "Alas! alas! what would our holy father, the pope, say to that?"

"But I have come to ask you what should be done to these," said Solignac.

"Done?" said the bishop. "Why, they should be publicly stripped of their robes before the congregation in the cathedral. They should be made to sit in stocks all the day with their crimes written on large placards on their backs, while a crier should call out before the public their ignominy and shame. They should be excommunicated by the Church, and after that be handed over to the righteous and avenging arm of the secular power, such as your own, and methinks you would know well what to do with them."

"Is that the sentence that you would pronounce?" asked Solignac eagerly.

"Yes," said the bishop, who thought that he was about to complain of Etienne and Hugues. "That is what I would do with them, had I the power."

"Will you kindly give orders for one of your clerks to write that out so that I can read it?" said Solignac.

"With pleasure," said the bishop, and, calling for one of his clerks, he gave the order as follows :

"I, Bishop of Limoges, give as my judgment that any abbot, monk, or ecclesiastic of any kind who shall be guilty of willfully maligning brother monks for their own aggrandizement or for the prejudice of another, or who shall be guilty of taking money that is not lawfully theirs, either by theft or false representation, or who shall be guilty of murder or attempts at murder; any monk, ecclesiastic, or abbot who shall be guilty of any or all of these crimes, than which there are none greater, should be brought into the cathedral and in the presence of the whole congregation, stripped of the ecclesiastical robes or vestments that they may wear; then, after hearing the censure of the bishop, should be put either in stocks or else, after being bound, should be escorted around the city, preceded by the town crier, who should recount their crimes and degradation; and, after this has been done, they should be brought back to the cathedral, where they should be solemnly excommunicated, and after that delivered over to the judgment of the secular law to receive the due reward of their crimes, which were committed not only against the Church, but also against the public good.

"(Signed,)  BISHOP OF LIMOGES."

The parchment was then given to the Lord of Solignac, who carefully folded it and placed it in his pocket.

"I hope," said he, "to bring you the creatures within three days."

"Good!" said the bishop. "But, alas! I have no control over the monastery of Grandmont. I have no right to judge either Etienne or Hugues or any of the company gathered there. They are under the special protection of the holy see, and we are powerless against them. But I can send to Rome and seek the revocation of the order, or have the charter amended so that they shall be put in the reach of my power."

"But I am not speaking of the monks of Grandmont at all."

"O, as for the Benedictines, I have complete jurisdiction over them. But you have no complaint to make against those worthy, lawful, and godly children of the Church, whom may all the saints bless," said the bishop, beginning to fear that he had been too hasty in his judgment and there dawned upon his mind the fact that perhaps he had been caught in a trap set by his own lips. "I can certainly hear no complaint from their best friend against them," continued the bishop, very much disconcerted by Solignac's remark that he had no complaint against the men of Grandmont.

"I have come to show your holiness the perfidy, the villainy, the base ingratitude, besides greater crimes, of the Benedictines of Solignac," said the lord in a low but determined voice, such as a man employs when he is confident of success and has forced the turn of affairs so that he can direct it.

"But I was not speaking of the Benedictines," interrupted the bishop; "I was—"

"Your grace only seeks truth and righteousness," broke in the lord, "and certainly can be no respecter of persons."

"But I only spoke of parties over whom I had no control," said the bishop, thoroughly excited, and seeking to find some way out of the dilemma into which his eagerness to crush Etienne and Hugues had placed him.

"I come to you," said Solignac, "as the honored bishop of this great diocese. The matter of persons no one who has any claim to the seat of a righteous judge, such as you are, can consider for a moment. Brutus ordered his own son to execution, and he was a pagan judge, and shall you not be more just than he?"

"Tell me what you will; I can but listen," said the bishop bitterly.

"Hear, then," said the lord. "It is now four months since I was called upon most unexpectedly to decide between the cowardly Lord Robert de Nevers and Hugues de Lacerta." Then followed a correct statement of the whole transaction as before given, in which the noble, manly conduct of Hugues was ably contrasted with the meanness of Robert. The attempt to poison Hugues was also repeated, and also the would-be assassination, the gift of money, followed by the letters of the Abbot of Solignac, with the answers of Etienne, and the forgery of Lord Solignac's signature and the reclaiming of the money, together with the implied assurance of the assassination of Hugues if sent in accordance with the wishes of the Benedictines.

The bishop, whose whole sympathy was on the side of the latter, sighed heavily at the news, but said: "My worthy lord, you recount terrible charges against the brothers of your neighborhood, but I can see no proof of your accusations. I know well the writing of my friend the abbot, and I assure you that is not in his hand. Some evil-minded persons have sought to add to the misfortunes of the monks of Grandmont and have falsified these things against them. You have been too hasty,

my lord. Give me the positive, undeniable proof, and I will proceed against even my own father, God bless him," said the bishop, who at once began to throw all the obstacles possible in the way of Solignac, whose success he wished most heartily to hinder. "But take my advice, Sir Knight," said the bishop, haughtily, having dropped all his affectionate appellatives, "and be careful how you lay your hands on God's elect. Take heed how you listen to that child of the devil, Hugues de Lacerta, whose innumerable crimes have bound him so close to the evil one that no power on earth can break them, and who goeth about now, like his father the devil, seeking whom he may devour. His honeyed words and flattering tongue may deceive you, but I have here the proofs of his guilt, and will shortly bring him to justice or have the whole order of Grandmont uprooted as an upas tree that poisons the earth."

So spake the excited and angry bishop, who hoped to cow Solignac and frighten him off from bringing accusations against his friends, the Benedictines.

Solignac arose to take his leave, saying significantly, "My father the bishop will see justice done here, or there is a higher court where we will see that the wrong shall be punished." So saying, he kissed the bishop's ring and started out, the bishop coldly bowing out his guest.

Solignac had no sooner departed than the bishop called together a couple of his faithful servants, and, writing a letter in great haste to the abbot of the Benedictines at Solignac, informed him of the dangerous attitude of the lord of that place, and advised him to send off the plotters, so that they might all justly swear to their innocence. The letter was delivered by mistake to the abbot himself, who took it to his cell to read and forgot all about it, thinking that it was of no great importance.

CHAPTER XVII.

AN ARROW IN THE DARK.

IN the meantime, Solignac was constrained by the etiquette of the time to pay a visit to the Vicomte de Limoges, who made him stay to an early dinner, so that it was dark before he quitted the castle. But the ride to his castle was not more than an hour and a half, and as he had been absent now about a week, he refused all further invitations and started for home.

He descended the steep hill that led down to the Vienne and across the old bridge of St. Martial. There was one glimmering torch that served to make the darkness more visible on the bridge, but the walls were raised on each hand, so that he had no fear of his horse going over the side, and the retreats every little way over the piers gave a chance for passers-by to wait until he had passed. Just as he reached the other side he felt the sharp blow of an arrow which struck the plate on his back. Wheeling his horse in an instant, he chased the retreating figure so vigorously that he was on him before the adversary was aware. Not waiting for his sword, he seized the robe of the would-be assassin and found it was that of a Benedictine. The rascal struggled hard, and finally succeeded in divesting himself of his robe, escaping naked across the bridge. All was darkness, and it was impossible to pursue the wretch, who had made good his retreat.

Turning his horse's head once more toward his castle, he rode as rapidly as he could, and it was not long before the lord was in his own domain. He had

brought with him the garment of his would-be murderer. Not waiting, he went immediately over to the abbey and demanded admittance, which was granted.

He went immediately to the prior and demanded that all of the monks should be called at the midnight prayers, and also that none should be allowed to leave or to enter the monastery without his consent for three days, under pain of his serious displeasure and the threat of the withdrawal of all the benefits that he bestowed.

At the midnight mass all were assembled, and the roll was called. There was an answer to every name, but Solignac saw that there was an evident attempt to hide something. He took from his own pocket the list from which he was wont to furnish them supplies, and asked each monk to step forward as his name was called. When he came to the name of Jaco, there was a pause. No one dared to say that he had gone until the prior admitted that he had been missing three days, having been permitted to go on a visit to Rome in accordance with his dream.

Solignac scowled, and found on going over the names that Virtulus was missing. He had been sent on a mission to the Bishop of Limoges and had not returned, they said. He asked for the number or sign of Virtulus, and found that it was the cross and the skull, the same which he had noticed on the robe out of which the assassin struggled. But he did not tell the monks why he had thus summoned them or why he had set his orders that none should leave without his express consent.

In addition to his orders he had set several of his own men to watch the roads, and especially to guard the gate and doorway of the abbey. Having made up his mind as to who the guilty party was, he went to rest. A little after midnight there was loud knocking at the portcullis, and before him was dragged the almost naked

and terribly frightened Virtulus. Standing there before the lord with only his nether garment on, mud bespattered and scratched, he was a piteous sight, and his terror knew no bounds when he was face to face with the man whom only a few hours before he had attempted to assassinate.

At first he tried to deny his identity, to make out that he was not Virtulus. He tried to stammer out something when questioned as to his name and why he was found out of the abbey at that time of night without his long brown cloak or robe. He gave as an excuse that he had been sent to Limoges by the prior on some business with the bishop, but the only excuse that he gave for the missing garment was that he had been pursued by the devil and had thrown it aside because it hindered his progress.

"Very strange, very strange," answered the lord, who now ordered the monk off to the dungeon and locked him in and took the key to his own chamber. Then, calling for a light, it occurred to him to examine the cloak carefully. Turning it wrong side out, he found a letter concealed in the folds bearing the mark of the Bishop of Limoges, addressed to the prior. Lord Solignac had no compunctions about opening and reading the contents of the letter. It was in the name of the prior, and was evidently a reply to certain questions. The prior had noted that the servant of the bishop came and went in all haste, and knew that the abbot had received letters from the bishop a little after three o'clock, and he knew that those letters would not be examined by their receiver before the next day, if ever. Curious to know what they were about, and not daring to disturb his superior, he had sent Virtulus to ascertain all that he could. This worthy brother had hurried to Limoges, and arrived shortly before the lord had left the castle of the

vicomte. The bishop had hastily written the note which was fastened in the garment, which read as follows :

“ TO THE HOLY PRIOR OF SOLIGNAC, IN GREAT HASTE : Unwisely I addressed two letters to the abbot this morning instead of yourself ; but let this inform you that all the plots that you have made against the monks of Etienne, and especially against Hugues, are known to the Lord of Solignac, who is greatly enraged. He has seen the receipt which Julius and Alexandres have signed for the money that they took from Etienne through the forged letter. Send off these monks as soon as possible, for it is quite sure that the lord will be detained at the vicomte's all night. To add to your discomfiture he has my written and signed judgment against you, which I innocently thought I was writing against the monks of Grandmont. The monks must be sent off to another place or the Lord of Solignac removed by some way. If the angel of death should suddenly strike him, it would be a blessing for the Benedictines. I need give you no further instructions, as your own good judgment will teach you what you ought to do.

“ In haste, yours devotedly,

“ BISHOP OF LIMOGES.”

The monk had heard the bishop read the letter out loud, and from the violent expressions knew that the removal of the lord would be a good thing for the order. He incidentally asked if there was a good bow with some arrows (and the bishop winked at a servant, who was fortunate enough to find them) with which to defend himself, and the Benedictine started to get back to Solignac that night, and had only reached the old bridge when he heard the tramp of the horse's feet that he rightly

surmised bore the enemy of his order. To draw his bowstring to the farthest notch, to place an arrow in rest was the work of a moment, and, hiding where the light would shine upon Solignac's back, he thought that he had his enemy in his power ; and had not a good plate of steel protected him, the Lord of Solignac would have perished that night, and his body would have been carried down the swift current of the Vienne. But that steel plate had upset the whole plan, and instead of being received with honor and glory by the Benedictines the wretch was in the dungeon of his would-be victim, and the letter in the hands of the one against whom it was addressed. Certainly there was little consolation or hope for the poor, weary, frightened, guilty wretch, who stretched himself in the dungeon where a few months before Hugues was confined.

The Lord of Solignac bethought himself of the bow, and started off two of his servants to search the bridge carefully at the first break of day. This they did, and shortly after sunrise came back with the bow, which bore the device of the Bishop of Limoges, for all the bishops at that time maintained an armed force to repel marauders and maintain order. He had simply given the murderous Virtulus one of these, to do with it what he saw fit.

At the same time that the two servants were sent to search for the bow a new expedient came to Solignac. He sat down and hastily made a good copy of the bishop's letter and sent it by a servant to the monastery. Virtulus had only a short beard and was an undersized man. There was a cute fellow among the servants of the castle who might easily be taken for the wretch. So, cutting his hair that he might have a tonsure, and putting on the garment of Virtulus, he bade him go to the monastery and make believe that he was the man in the dungeon, and hear all that he could, and find out who were the ones

most implicated. He wanted to know whether the monks would receive anybody without his orders, and whether he was judging rightly.

Virtulus, after passing the lord's guards, had no difficulty in gaining admittance. The door was opened and he was hastily received. The poor fellow hardly knew what to do, but said he had taken a severe cold and could hardly speak; so he answered in a very hoarse voice and coughed so violently that they did not press him with questions, saying, "Let him wait until the morrow." But the prior, who was on hand, opened the letter, which was a good imitation of the bishop's hand, and read the contents to the crowd. There were only about ten present, most conspicuous among whom were Julius and Alexandres.

"I wish, by all the saints," said the prior, "that we had not started in this business. It will only bring disaster upon us. We accuse Hugues of what we know he is innocent, and we will not rest until we have proven ourselves guilty. Let us stop the whole thing and give back the one hundred sous and be friends with the men of Grandmont."

"You have not the good of the Benedictines at heart," said Alexandres. "You would see the gifts all turned away and ourselves turned off, no one knows where, just because that imp of the devil, Hugues, wins all hearts by his wiles."

"Did you not promise our dear brother Jaco that you would see the honor of our abbey vindicated?" put in Julius. "And is this the way that you would keep your promise?"

"Suppose that the Lord of Solignac does know some of our plottings, we will bring the necessary proof to show conclusively that we are innocent, and can show any number of alibis for our good brothers Julius and Alexandres," said another.

"Had we not better find a way of escape for these two?" put in a third.

"No," replied the prior; "that would be a confession of judgment, and as he saw these brothers here last night, he must find them here to-morrow."

"But," suggested a fifth, "Virtulus has come since then."

"Yes," answered the prior, "one can escape. Let them cast lots to see which it shall be."

Lots were cast and Alexandres was taken, and so he at once started. The door was opened and he softly stole out, but he had not gone very far in the darkness before there was a strong hand upon his shoulder and a blade in close proximity to his heart, with a threat that if any noise or resistance was made he would be instantly dispatched. After this he was conducted to the lord's castle and found a place in a dungeon near that of Virtulus.

Lord Solignac attended the early mass next morning and noted who were present. His quick eyes soon discovered Virtulus's cloak with his servant in it, and after the ceremony was finished he invited that would-be monk and the prior to go over to the castle, which they did. He had the monk wait outside a moment, ushered the prior into his private room, excused himself, and as he went out noiselessly turned the key on the outside so as to secure the prior, and began to catechise the servant. He soon found out all he wished to know, ascertaining that the ringleaders were few in number, that the abbot himself knew nothing of what was going on, and that the prior was acting against his conscience and better judgment. After gaining this knowledge he dismissed the servant, ordering him to put on his own clothes and give up the monk's habit. Then he went back to the prior, who had only been in durance about half an hour. This

individual was not so bad by nature as might be supposed from the remarks that he made at the reception of the letter from the bishop, although from certain intrigues it would seem that he was steeped in iniquity; but his soul revolted from actual crime. He thought that when he could gain anything by intrigue it was lawful prey, but he would have opposed every open crime, like murder; indeed, intrigue was one of the fine arts, and it was considered a lawful practice in his time. The sinfulness of the scheme, like theft among the Spartans, consisted in being found out, and if a statue were erected in ancient Sparta to the youth who stole a fox and hid the beast under his garments, stoutly denying the theft while the fox was gnawing at his vitals, nearly every prior, abbot, bishop, cardinal, and pope of the Middle Ages might put in an equal claim to be remembered by posterity.

The prior pretended to be totally absorbed in meditation as the lord reentered, and when the latter began to apologize for keeping him waiting, he simply answered that it was of no consequence. "I was communing all the time with St. Martial." This is the patron saint of Limoges, and the one whom all the Limousins believe to be the lad that carried the loaves and two fishes for the Saviour in the wilderness. They say he became the first Bishop of Limoges, and show a skull which they claim to be his, bearing, they say, the marks of the divine fingers; but the impression, as seen to day, appears more like a fracture.

"A most worthy subject of thought," said the lord. "Now let me call your attention to things of to-day, and tell me if St. Martial would approve of them." Lord Solignac then recounted the whole history of Hugues and Etienne, told of the letters sent from the abbot, which he produced, also of the forgery of his own name, of his

visit to the Bishop of Limoges, of the attack made on his life the night previous. All these things the lord set forth in very strong and impressive language. Then he contrasted how he had given a regular allowance of the yield of his lands to the Benedictines and the mean jealousy that was aroused by his gift of the one hundred sous to Etienne.

The prior was astounded by what he heard. He saw at a glance that everything was known by the lord, but, as for himself, he denied any participation in the schemes, and said that he always regarded his lordship as one of the best friends of the monastery, and acknowledged their entire dependence upon him.

The lord then asked if his orders had been observed carefully. The prior said, "Yes, to the very letter."

"Are you sure?" repeated the lord.

"Yes, I will affirm it on the mass," answered the prior.

Two of his servants were dispatched to bring up the manacled Alexandres.

"Do you know this man?" asked the lord sarcastically, as the monk entered.

The two men gazed at one another in stupefied silence. Finally the prior, recovering himself, said sternly to Alexandres, "How did you escape?"

"I opened the door when all were in their cells to go to carry some alms to the hermit of Mount Jovis," said Alexandres without a blush, seeking to hide the guilt of his master and trusting that the same would be done for him.

The prior took the hint quickly and said: "I bade you go, but you should have kept the lord's orders. Know you not how much we depend on his bounty? I condemn you to bread and water for a month for this act of disobedience, though I know that your heart was right."

Alexandres bowed his head. Then, taking Alexandres back to his dungeon, Solignac ordered the garb of Virtulus to be again thrown over the servant and had him brought before the prior.

"Didst thou enter into the monastery last night after midnight?" asked the lord of this new witness.

"I did, your lordship."

"Whom didst thou see there?"

"I saw the prior, (God bless him!) Alexandres, Julius, and several others," replied Virtulus.

"Did the prior give consent for any person to leave the abbey?"

"Yes, he allowed Alexandres to escape."

"On what grounds?" asked Solignac.

"Because I had come in, and the number would be the same," answered the counterfeit monk.

"It is false, thou evil-tongued, lying hypocrite. I will have thee judged by the abbot for perjury, and thy tongue shall be burned with red-hot iron to teach thee to tell the truth about thy superiors," cried the enraged prior, glaring fiercely at Virtulus. "Didst thou not hear me say that not a soul could leave the abbey, and that the lord must find the same number this morning that he had counted last night?" he continued.

"Yes, thou didst say that," replied Virtulus, trembling, for he feared the terrors that would come upon his soul if he incurred the wrath of the Benedictines.

"Why, then, hast thou said that I permitted Alexandres to leave the monastery?"

"Because—because—" stammered the trembling servant, "because it was true."

The lord came to the rescue of his servant and ordered the pseudo-monk out of his presence to his cell. The prior sat stern and dignified. Turning to the lord haughtily, he said: "I appeal from you to the noble

Bishop of Limoges if I have done wrong. Meet me there, and we will have the matter decided justly before his grace. I am not a dog to be kenneled and locked up like thy meanest serf. I demand the rights that belong to my dignity and position."

"Fear not," said the lord; "thou mayst get more justice than thy taste will relish. Tell me, hast thou received a letter from the Bishop of Limoges?"

"Yes," responded the prior; "I receive letters from him almost every day. But what is that to thee?"

"Much every way," replied the lord. "Tell me what were the contents of the letter thou didst receive last night?"

"I refuse to divulge the contents of a private letter. It would be unbecoming in me, as a son of the Church, and it is unbecoming in you, as a just lord, to ask it," answered the prior.

"Perhaps thy memory will be aided by this," said Solignac, and he began to read the letter that he had taken from the garment of Virtulus.

The prior was silent during the reading, and amazed beyond measure that the lord had a copy of the letter, but still he appeared unmoved. Solignac asked, "Is this a copy of the letter thou didst receive?"

"Thou knowest so much that I will declare nothing more to add to thy information; for if thou canst waylay messengers and take letters, there are few things that thou wouldst not descend to commit," answered the prior most bitterly, at the same time finding all manner of fault with Virtulus for not telling that the lord had taken a copy of the letter.

"I will ask thee to wait here a little while," said the lord, withdrawing.

"I am in thy power; do what thou wishest," responded the prior.

Lord Solignac now went over to the monastery and asked to see the abbot himself. He was received by an elderly man, who had all the appearance of a student annoyed at being disturbed while at work. To him the lord related the whole story from beginning to end. He had to repeat it, and produced the letters signed by the abbot himself, which filled the latter with horror. The facts served to arouse the abbot fully, who put off all of the sluggishness of his nature, and at once determined to ferret out the whole truth. He saw the position of the Bishop of Limoges, and insisted in sending him a letter asking that the truth might be manifested and that the guilty parties, no matter who they were, might be brought to punishment. While assuring the bishop that the letters bearing his signature were signed by him, not knowing the contents, and that he had the very highest reverence for Etienne and Hugues, nevertheless as scandal had been raised, he thought it best that all things should be done in public, and asked, therefore, that on the third day from that date there might be assembled at Limoges a solemn conclave, that the wrongdoer might be brought to justice and the righteous vindicated, "lest," added the abbot, "we harbor serpents within our bosoms who may not only poison ourselves, but bring disaster upon the whole of the orders."

The letter of the abbot was sincere, and he proved himself so to the entire satisfaction of Solignac, who at once returned after obtaining the abbot's word that the prior should be forthcoming at the given time in Limoges. He returned to his castle, and, going at once to the chamber where the prior was confined, asked him, "Are you willing to have these things, as alleged, brought before the Bishop of Limoges, who with the ecclesiastical authorities will act as judges?"

The prior, thinking that he was playing with loaded

dice in having the bishop for his judge, assented most heartily, saying: "I want nothing better than that this whole matter shall be thoroughly sifted. I am conscious of my innocence and the guiltlessness of the order. I also demand that you release at once Virtulus and Alexandres, that they may fit themselves by prayer and fasting and partaking of the holy communion for the testimony that they will give."

"Fear not," said Solignac. "They shall give their testimony, and for that reason I will keep them safe. They may offer as many prayers as they like and eat as little as they choose, but I will take it upon myself to see that they have nothing to hinder them in giving testimony." So saying, he opened the door and told the prior that he had finished his interview and that he was at liberty to retire, which the wily monk made haste to do.

CHAPTER XVIII.

CATCHING A TARTAR.

ON reentering the monastery the prior was at once met by the abbot in person, who ordered him to his own cell, and to wait there until he came. Never had the Abbot of Solignac assumed such power before, and the prior was astonished at the new turn that affairs had taken. Unquestioning obedience he had always demanded of the monks below him in rank, and he was accustomed to obey, in turn, those above him. While he was in his cell, the abbot called the monks one after another to confession, and by careful questioning drew out their side of the story, which was highly colored. They had twisted the logic of Jaco until now they had sworn to hypotheses as veritable facts, and they tried to make Hugues out an incarnate fiend and in league with the devil.

All these things prejudiced the mind of the abbot, who was naturally inclined to believe his own monks, just as a parent is to take the word of his own children, but the letters that the nobleman had shown him that morning proved that there was conspiracy of some kind in the very camp of the Benedictines. After finishing with the monks the abbot called for the prior, who came from his cell and made a full confession of all that he had done and knew, for he thought it was best ; but he gave such a colored account of his side of the affair that he did not take much away from the bad impression made on the abbot's mind by the confessions of the others.

The abbot chided the prior very sharply for doing what he had done, and especially for the forged letter asking for the money; but the prior declared that Jaco had written the letter, and that he assented to it because he thought that the Lord of Solignac ought to look after the interests of the Benedictines before he assisted the beggars of Grandmont, and especially as the character of Hugues had been so bad, and from present indications was no better. The prior promised to hold himself in readiness to go with all of the accused monks to Limoges, where before the bishop they would meet the accuser and stand the tests of trial.

"May God defend the right," said the abbot.

"May God defend us," whispered the prior.

The intervening time was spent in special prayers and fasting by the monks, for the abbot determined himself to go and see that justice was rendered. Meanwhile the lord had sent the following letter to the bishop :

"TO HIS GRACE, THE BISHOP OF LIMOGES, GREETING: At the last interview which I had the honor of having with your grace it was proposed to hold a trial in the cathedral before the congregation. Will you be pleased, therefore, the third day from this date, to hold yourself in readiness, together with the ecclesiastical authorities that surround your seat, to sit in judgment on the matter between the Benedictines and the monks of Grandmont which shall be brought against certain monks over whom you have jurisdiction; and be prepared to carry an appeal to the archbishop, the cardinal, or to the pope himself, if your judgment be not in accordance with the facts given in testimony. I need not inform you, I suppose, that my life was attempted by a monk who was seen at your house at the time of or shortly after my departure, with a weapon branded with your special

device. I need not say, further, that the letter sent by you to the Benedictines is in my possession, together with the person who went out from your house indirectly commissioned to murder me. These things I hold. They will not be produced at the trial, as I wish to keep them in reserve for the appeal which will be made if you are in any way unjust, and which will, if necessary, open the way for your deposition from the sacred seat, like your illustrious predecessor.

Hoping that the sense of justice which has long been dormant within you will be so aroused by these presents that it will be unnecessary to make any appeals because of your determination to see right done by all parties,

I am, as ever, your obedient servant,

“(Signed,)”

LORD OF SOLIGNAC.”

The letter had the effect of frightening the bishop thoroughly. To know that his own letter was in the hands of Solignac, and that the very bow that was used in the attempt to assassinate him was found, besides all that he imagined that the lord knew (which as yet he did not know), made the master of the bishopric anxious to conciliate the lord. He accordingly wrote, asking pardon for his seeming rudeness, and regretting a thousand times that a weapon with his mark should be employed against his person, and declaring that what he wrote he had done under misapprehensions, and at the same time assuring him that the whole matter would be tried on the principles of justice and equity, concluding by asking the lord himself to be one of the lay judges who might add “wise counsel and secure justice by his superior knowledge.” He also offered to invite Etienne himself to sit as an associate judge. This was rare cunning, for he knew well that Etienne was under a vow not to quit the mountains unless ordered to do so by the pope.

The letter, however, satisfied Solignac, who sent for Hugues to appear on the third day. At Grandmont there was also some inquietude. All were anxious but Hugues, who was as calm and peaceful as if he were preparing for the most ordinary duties of life. Etienne thought it best to inform the monks now, and at the next meeting in their chapel, after the regular service was over, he began as follows :

“My brothers, it is not known to you, but it is nevertheless true, that certain persons, evil disposed, have been uttering scandalous things concerning our beloved brother Hugues. I have examined into these things and have found, as you might expect and believe, that he is perfectly innocent of them. He is to leave in three days for his trial before the Bishop of Limoges, where he is willing to appear before the court there established, in order that he may testify as to his own innocence, as well as to remove the stigma that would or might otherwise be cast upon our order. I will ask the good brother Leo to accompany him on this occasion, and will request you all to unite with me in three days’ special fasting and prayers, that the judges may have wisdom and grace rightly to divine the truth and acquit the innocent.”

With these words Etienne closed, his eyes flowing with tears and the whole company of brothers sobbing out of regard for Hugues, whom they all loved and honored.

Those two days were very solemn days at Solignac, Grandmont, and Limoges. The bishop was in a position from which he was forced to act with some semblance of justice. Lord Solignac had refused to act as judge himself, for he said that he was an accusing party, but he requested that the Lord of Aixe be selected as his substitute. Although this lord had led a life similar to that of Hugues before he came under the influence

of Etienne, he had never gone so far as the Lord of Chalus, and had a reputation of being just, though he at times seemed to delight in cruelty. For example, having caught a couple of highwaymen who had committed a brutal murder, he ordered them hung up to the nearest tree, and allowed no one to take them down until the bones dropped to the earth, and the birds of prey and wild beasts were allowed to pick them. His territories were kept in order and his judgment was feared.

The Bishop of Limoges murmured within himself, and did not like the prospect of seeing one of his Benedictines dangling at a rope's end. However, he was forced reluctantly to yield.

In order to be a little beforehand some of the brother Benedictines at Limoges—for there was another monastery of the same order in that city—thought it would be a good idea to put Hugues out of the way before the trial began. So a party of three, disguising their faces, went up along the old post road to Ambazac, down which they knew the monks would come, and in the forest that covered the banks of the Vienne, toward what is now called St. Priest, they waited for Hugues, supposing that he would make the journey alone; for they knew that Etienne would not come, and they thought it would be impolitic for Etienne or Hugues to tell the other monks until after the trial.

Hugues and Leo had left their mountain caves at about three o'clock in the morning, counting on reaching Limoges a little after seven. The former had not entirely recovered from his late sickness, but was able to go around. He had lost much of his power, still he carried his heavy staff that had served him so well on former occasions. They walked along in silence for a while until near St. Priest, when Hugues asked his com-

panion to walk on, as he wanted to pray alone for a few moments, adding that he would catch up with him. Leo did as he was bid, walking along fearlessly in the early morning, when suddenly Hugues heard a cry, and looking ahead saw three disguised monks attacking his companion. He never waited to finish his prayer, but before they were aware of it he was upon them. The heavy blows of his gnarled staff fell with precision, and though not quite as strong as when the two robber vassals of Robert were laid low, still they had force enough to knock two insensible, and the third ran away with great energy.

In a moment Hugues was bending over the body of his companion, but beyond a severe cut on his forearm, which he had used to parry a blow that was thrust at his heart, there was no very serious wound. Then to make sure of the others, who suffered only from severe concussions on the head, they were speedily bound by the cord that served to keep up Hugues's gown and driven before the two monks of Grandmont toward Limoges.

Hugues was now all on the *qui vive*. His spirit had been aroused by the fray of the morning, but just what to do he did not know. The monks had set upon poor Leo, thinking that it was Hugues, for one of them had said as he gave the thrust, "If thou art not the devil, escape that;" but the quick raising of the strong arm of Leo, who in his youth had been accustomed to the exercise of arms, had parried the stroke, receiving only a severe cut, which his thick, heavy robe did much to soften. He gave a cry of surprise and stepped back, and by leaping from side to side had avoided a regular encounter until the staff of Hugues had put in its good work from an unexpected quarter.

Hugues thought it best to march the two right to the cathedral. Leo observed, "They will be instantly put at liberty by their confederates there."

"Well," said Hugues, "shall we march them off into the forest and secure them until after the trial?"

"Suppose that the trial lasts several days, what will the poor sinners do?" said Leo.

"O, they must not die in their sins; they must surely be converted," answered Hugues.

Meanwhile, as they were marching on toward Limoges, they were met by a company of half a dozen Benedictines, who had come up from Limoges to hear the result of the plot. They were surprised to see Leo in blood-stained garments coming along with Hugues, and the two monks, with their hands bound behind them and tied together so scientifically that they were doubly secured, marching in front like sheep driven to the slaughter. One of the monks rushed up to Hugues and cried, "Thou son of Beelzebub, what dost thou mean by binding these two innocent brothers? Dost thou think that thou art able to exterminate the whole order of the Benedictines?" And with that he drew out a large dagger and made a dash to cut the bands of the captives, but a rap on his head brought him to the ground, and with the simple words, "Hands off," Hugues ordered the six to walk toward Limoges, and not approach within ten paces of the captives. As these words were spoken with the voice of a man accustomed to being obeyed, and as the staff of Hugues assumed a very persuasive attitude, the monks thought best to comply, saying that when they reached Limoges matters would be arranged in a just way.

They started on, intending to take to the woods that were on each side a little farther on, but just at that instant there was a sound of horses' hoofs. The monks thought it might be some one on whom they might call, and turning to Hugues again said, "Now, villain, unbind those men." They turned and were picking up

stones to begin the assault, when up dashed Lord Solignac and his party, who had come to escort Hugues to the cathedral.

"Well, well, my brother, what have you here?" cried the lord, as he saw the monks with stones in their hands and the others bound. "A fine hunt you have had this morning. What means this blood on Leo? Well, you have not all turned flagellants?" said he, laughing.

"This personification of the devil," cried one of the Benedictines who was bound, "set upon us unarmed while we were praying and, after beating us until we were nearly dead, bound us and commanded us to march ahead like two cattle to be butchered."

"Yes, he is a veritable madman," said the fellow who had sought to cut the bands. "He gave me a stroke on my head that has raised a lump as large as your fist, because I spoke in favor of the innocent men that he is martyring."

"You have not told your story," said Lord Solignac to Hugues.

"You speak, Leo," said Hugues. "I am no orator; but I can make a few gestures yet, can't I?" said he, as he looked at one of the monks who had felt his staff.

Leo began, and repeated the whole story of the assault and of Hugues's valiant rescue.

"Just what I would have expected from Hugues," said the lord, and with that he blew a loud blast on his horn, and within a couple of minutes a score of vassals on horseback came dashing up.

"Here," said the lord; "march all these monks off to the castle of the vicomte as my prisoners. Allow no one to approach the two who are bound. Take one of the chains that you have with you and bind them hand and foot together, and have them placed in the deepest

dungeon. Keep the others in custody at my charge until I come after the trial.

"We protest; we are innocent, and have done no harm to any person," cried the six monks.

"Silence!" thundered the lord. "If any of them opens his mouth while on the way, clap on the irons."

The vassals did as required, and in a few moments Hugues had his old rope girdle back in its accustomed place, and all further anxiety concerning the prisoners was at an end. They were hurried off to the castle dungeons, while Solignac accompanied Hugues and Leo to the cathedral.

Contrary to the general rule, Hugues said, "I am hungry and wish to eat something before the trial." The excitement was severe for him, and he wished to be prepared for what might come. Certainly the opening had not been very promising. The malice of the Benedictines knew no bounds, and it was very evident that by fair means or foul they meant his destruction.

"Fear not," spoke Leo. "Thy God is with thee. The powers of hell cannot disturb thee. Etienne is praying for thee."

Hugues said he feared not for himself, but he did not wish to bring sorrow and disgrace upon the heads of his poor brother monks, and especially upon Etienne, whom he loved so dearly.

The fears were all ungrounded. Solignac had enlisted the vicomte in his favor, and all the neighboring lords were present and sided with him. While all of the ecclesiastical authorities were in favor of the Benedictines, they were afraid of the gentry, and between the two it was pretty certain that no one was to be seriously hurt.

CHAPTER XIX.

IN THE CATHEDRAL OF ST. MARTIAL.

THE bells of old St. Martial sounded long and loud that morning. Not since the visit of Urban II had such an assembly gathered under the ancient roof. According to the custom it was first necessary for all of the assembly, the accused and the accusers, to attend mass.

What an assemblage it was ! The seats or boxes for the gentry were all filled with the first families of the center of France. Each one, with his crest and armorial bearings, occupied the place assigned him. The most important personage, of course, was the Vicomte de Limoges, who was also an assistant judge with the Comte d' Aix. The bishop had two ecclesiastics as his assistants, and presided. The mass was most impressive. The chanting priests, the acolytes swinging their censers, the priests in their rich robes were an imposing pageant, and on his throne, with plumes waving above his head, in his long robe of purple and gold, sat the bishop, crowned with his hat of red and gold.

The services being ended, the bishop arose, and after bowing toward the pyx turned toward the assembly and said : " It is with unspeakable sorrow that we have learned that great and terrible scandals have arisen within our diocese. Holy orders have been profaned with the vilest depravity. When our holy father was here, he publicly rebuked the monks of Uzerche for concubinage and lasciviousness ; but methinks that even these are lesser crimes than some stand accused of before this bar of God. We detest the thief always ; but when men

invested with the sacred robes of monks are guilty, the crime is a hundredfold more terrible. When added to this is the unpardonable sin of perjury, it becomes intolerable ; but when besides this there exists the intent and the act of willful murder, the culprit is beyond the limit of mercy and should be condemned by both the Church and State. And yet there is a crime more heinous than these already mentioned—it is that of being in league with the devil. If a man sells himself to the evil one, and for the price of his own soul obtains certain powers over his fellows by which he can carry on his infernal works, that one is as guilty as the devil himself of all crimes, and there is nothing in all the galaxy of sinfulness that he is not guilty of, for he is a fellow-partaker with the devil, and rightly merits the condemnation of God and men. Now, therefore, before the trial begins, in order that the guilty ones may know that there is no respect of persons with me, I do hereby declare that the one who shall be proven guilty shall be publicly censured here in this solemn assemblage by me, shall then be escorted by certain officers around the city and the inclosure of the castle, while a public crier shall proclaim before the multitude the crimes that he has committed ; then he shall be brought back to the cathedral and publicly degraded from his office, divested of his robe, and excommunicated ; after that he shall be given over to the secular power to be put to death in the way that they shall deem proper.” Then, turning to his associate judges, he asked, “Does this meet your approval ?” They all signified their assent. “Now let all the accused come to the bar.”

The clerk of the bishop began to read the names. The first called out was Hugues de Lacerta, and up rose the old monk and walked to the rail of the altar, where he knelt. The bishop intended to call no more, but

Solignac arose and demanded that the other accused persons be also brought forward.

"No," said the bishop; "we will try one at a time."

"I demand that the others be brought forward and that this court decide between them," thundered Solignac.

The lay judges said: "The lord is right. How can we judge between two unless both are placed on trial?"

The two ecclesiastics were silent, and the bishop said: "Since it seems good to my fellow-judges that all the accused should be tried at once, we, only seeking justice to all, yield to their request, and order that all who are accused shall take their places at the bar."

The clerk then began and read the names of Virtulus, Alexandres, and Julius. Solignac arose and asked what was the charge against Virtulus. This was the way that the bishop took to get his worst witness out of his enemy's hands. The bishop answered that he understood that there were charges against that monk, but would erase the name if objection was made.

The name was erased, and Alexandres and Julius took their places opposite Hugues.

"I call for the prior of Solignac," demanded the lord, and the prior, who thought that he was to be only a witness and not one of the accused, arose, and from the lofty place reserved for the dignitaries demanded what was alleged against him.

"The crimes mentioned in the bishop's speech," answered Solignac. Trembling, he protested, but was compelled by the bishop to take his place at the bar among the accused.

The bishop then descended. With the gospels in one hand and a cross in the other, while a deacon preceded him with a vessel of holy water, he approached Hugues and said: "Dost thou swear on these holy

books that thou art innocent of one and all of the sins that have been enumerated in thy hearing? Dost thou call upon God to damn thy soul, the devil to take thee to the lowest hell, and thy body to be burned in the fires of the bottomless pit if what thou sayest is false?" Then, waiting a moment before he allowed Hugues to swear, he began a discourse on the wickedness of perjury, and likened the perjurer to one worse than Judas, a veritable fiend in human form, to whom the sacred body of Christ was nothing, and for whose soul the devils were waiting to drag it into the lake of brimstone. He finished, thinking that he might be able to frighten Hugues from taking the oath. Then he asked, "Wilt thou swear to this?"

"With all my heart," answered Hugues, dipping his hand in the holy water and making the sign of the cross.

"If thou art false, even though thou dost escape the present moment, remember thou art damned," cried the bishop, still holding back the gospels.

"I am willing to be lost if I speak what is not true in every particular," answered Hugues.

There was nothing now to do but to allow him to swear, which he did. Reverently placing his right hand on the book and his left on the cross, he repeated the sacred formula and crossed himself. The bishop next went to the prior and monks, but was offering the books without putting the same formula to them when Solignac demanded that all the accused should be treated alike until one of them was proven guilty. The other judges all assented to this, which seemed so openly fair to all. So the bishop had to repeat the same words to the prior, who protested in vain, and said that his rank and position lifted him above such things. But Solignac said: "Hugues has a higher rank than you, and you

were willing to see him submit to that oath. Now take it if you dare ! Hugues has the right to call for a judicial combat—and who is there that would like to stand before his lance—and yet he has humbled himself to come here and swear as a common monk or priest. Therefore, vaunt not yourself, but swear.”

The prior mumbled something. The bishop said that he had sworn, and passed on to the other two, who did not hesitate to swear by all that was sacred that they were not only wholly innocent, but that they would there tell the whole truth.

The prior continued to interrupt and protest, and the confusion was so great that the Lord of Solignac, who was the general attorney for Hugues, gave consent to withdraw the accusation temporarily upon the consent of the judges that he should be called to the bar whenever the Lord of Solignac thought it necessary to accomplish the ends of justice. With this indictment hanging over him the prior subsided thoroughly frightened. The solemn oath that the bishop had gotten up only for Hugues had been administered to him, and he was determined to say nothing that could be in any way construed by Solignac as false, for he greatly feared condemnation, and, as he saw the Vicomte de Limoges and the Lord of Aixe had seats on the judges' bench, he knew that his loaded dice were not to be played, and that cold, impartial justice would be meted out. The poor man, who had considerable conscience after all, was torn by a thousand doubts. He knew that he had in a measure perjured himself. He was wild with fears within and foes without.

The whole morning had been taken up with the mass, the opening speech of the bishop, and the administering of the oaths, and after the oaths were administered there was another short mass. It was then time to ad-

jour for the noonday meal. The accused were to be kept within the cathedral, guarded by the vassals of the two lay judges and by some of the bishop's minions. The prior asked leave to go out, and was intrusted to some of his brother Benedictines ; but he had no appetite for dinner, and begged that he might be allowed to go to the shrine of Ste. Valérie and pray alone. The poor fellow was trembling under the weight of his accusing conscience, his perjury, and the dread of what might be unearthed at the trial.

A hundred times he wished that he had acted justly by Hugues, and the terrible oath he had sworn and the calm, serene face of Hugues which he had seen in the morning had made him the more sure of his sin. How should he escape ? What should he do ? In a bewilderment of accusing thoughts and self-condemnations he knelt on the stones where Ste. Valérie, that early saint, had suffered her head to be cut off rather than commit a crime. The shrine was just above the Vienne, which was rolling below, swollen much above its normal size by the recent rains. As he looked down upon those cold, sullen waves, they seemed to offer a hiding place from the world of accusations and sorrows. It took but a moment for him to decide. He rose from his knees, and with the crucifix bound to his lips plunged into the rapid current.

No one saw the mad act but the Eye that never slumbers ; no one recorded the deed but the recording angel ; no one called him back ; but the burning conscience within made the cold waters warm. Not a cry escaped his lips. Down he went, caught now in the rapids, hurled hither and thither against rocks and stones. The hated life was extinct, but the corpse was tossed and whirled on and on for miles and then cast up on the shore.

CHAPTER XX.

THE ORDEAL OF THE CROSSES.

THE bells of the cathedral sounded out the call for the gathering, and soon the streaming multitude was jostling back to the place of trial. Again the court opened with a short religious service. The scrutinizing eye of Solignac discerned the vacant seat of the prior, and asked that he be brought up as the first witness. The crier called for the prior, but in vain. The Benedictines could give no information, but assured the court that he would be brought back later. There was indeed great anxiety among them for his return. Searches were ordered and inquiries made, but no one could give the least idea of his whereabouts. The last seen of him was when he was praying at the foot of the statue of Ste. Valérie on the bank of the Vienne, but the awful truth never once dawned upon them. The bishop said that, as the testimony of the prior could be accepted at any point, it would be a saving of time and patience to hear the testimony of Hugues first and then the others.

Solignac said that it was only right to have the accusers of Hugues come forward and make their accusations and swear to them, and then let the accused be called up and defend himself. The other judges all agreed to the same thing; so Alexandres and Julius were brought to the stand to testify. The bishop conducted the examination, and began by asking them how many times a day they prayed, how often they fasted, what penance they performed. To all these the two responded in a way to impress the judges that they were the most exemplary

monks in the world. Then he asked how they came to see Hugues, and they said they were on a mission of mercy which led them through certain woods, when suddenly they were startled by hearing cries of pain and agony. They hastened near the spot, and saw Hugues in the act of killing two men. They were afraid to approach, as he had all the appearance of one possessed with a devil. Even from where they stood they could smell the sulphur on his breath. They saw him in the act of robbing their bodies when Robert de Nevers came up, and Hugues pursued him with murderous intentions, until the Lord of Solignac, coming up just then, took Robert to his castle. They also testified that they remained at the castle the two intervening nights between the capture and the combat, and had heard strange noises and smelled sulphur, caused by the approach of the devil, with whom they were sure Hugues was conversing; and they declared that the devil paralyzed his adversary and made him an easy prey to Hugues.

Then the bishop asked about the hundred sous. Had they been to the monastery of Grandmont? Had they asked for the money? They swore most solemnly that they had done no such things. "Here are two witnesses that have testified, and the one corroborates the other in every particular. The facts seem very plain" said the bishop. "I do not see any use of questioning Hugues, unless it is to urge him to confess. Two witnesses are stronger than one, and to make him perjure himself would be to add sin to sin, 'for in the mouth of two or three witnesses shall every word be established.' I move therefore that the trial be closed and that judgment be pronounced according to the testimony against Hugues." And assuming a horrified attitude, he turned quickly toward Hugues and said, "God have mercy on thy soul, steeped in every crime. I therefore pronounce—"

"Hold, thou worse than Haman," cried Solignac. "Thou shalt be hung upon thine own gallows."

"What meanest thou by daring to disturb the judge in the most solemn act of giving sentence?" cried the bishop, trembling with rage and lifting his pastoral crook.

"Thou most unjust and wicked judge," cried Solignac, "to presume to pronounce sentence when thou hast only heard one side, and that of those whom thine own letters shall prove to be perjurers."

"Peace, peace," cried the vicomte." We have come here to sit at an orderly trial, and it must proceed. The bishop was too hasty. He must wait until all are heard and the consent of the whole bench of judges is given before he pronounces judgment."

The bishop, who had thought that he would be able to cut off further testimony and condemn Hugues on the plea that two witnesses could not be overthrown by one, and also by the seemingly merciful act of not being a party to aid a man in committing perjury, attempted to pronounce sentence. If he had once given sentence, the act would have gone before the world as a condemnation, whether Hugues was rescued by force or not, and that was just what the bishop sought to do. Now that he was checked, he called upon the vicomte to direct matters, saying that he would not assist a man to perjure himself, for he thought they would call on Hugues, who would contradict the matter entirely. But Solignac said, "My lord, I would ask that the honored Abbot of Solignac be heard."

The venerable abbot was not asked to come on the stand as a common witness, but when questioned said: "The two monks, Alexandres and Julius, are monks of my order at Solignac. They had not been permitted to leave the monastery on the day that Robert's vassals were found dead. They were only permitted to spend

the day of the judicial trial at the castle with a number of the monks, and I had unwittingly sent them on a message to the monastery by signing a letter without reading it, which, as I have since learned was an order for the monks to go to Grandmont for the money. I regret that action, but it was craftily done by one Jaco, who is off on a pilgrimage to Rome. Now the prior has confessed that he acted against his better judgment, but is sorry for it."

"Have you ever received a letter from the Bishop of Limoges on the subject?" asked Solignac.

"I have," said the abbot.

"Will you produce it if the judges demand?"

The bishop became livid, and said that what he had sent as a pastoral letter was a secret, and no one had a right to enter into those matters. He forbade the abbot, under pain of excommunication, to produce that letter.

The Vicomte de Limoges said: "If the letter be simply a pastoral letter, it is not to be produced; but if it in any way pertains to the matter before the court, it is no more than right that the letter should be read by the abbot before all, lest," he sharply observed, "the matter be carried before a court where the bishop himself will be among the accused, and we be witnesses against him."

"I have written nothing evil, God knows," said the bishop, "and I withdraw my prohibition from the abbot. He can read it if he likes."

"He has no choice. I will read it myself before all," cried the vicomte, and, going over to the abbot, received the first letter that the bishop wrote after his interview with Solignac, when he dined at the palace.

The letter, as the reader already knows, was a warning to the Benedictines that Lord Solignac knew how his name had been forged, and that Alexandres and

Julius had received back the money on that forged demand. The bishop asked to see that letter. (At the first mention of the letter he had sent a messenger over to his palace ordering his clerk, who at his request wrote the letter, to go to Bordeaux without a moment's delay and remain until sent for.) When he looked at the letter, he said "That is a forgery," and ordered all the clerks in the palace brought knowing well that the one who wrote it was not there. They all were right in swearing that they were not the writers, yet there was the bishop's seal and signature. So, although the bishop's action in prohibiting the letter to be given as testimony had been against him and everybody believed him guilty, still he was able to avail himself of the absence of the clerk to make sure that there was no positive proof against him. Nevertheless he was effectually subdued, and his influence was lessened for the rest of the trial.

Solignac then asked the abbot why he had not immediately ordered the money restored. The abbot answered straightforwardly that he had not had his attention called to the letter until Lord Solignac's visit three days before the trial, and that no one had been allowed to leave the monastery since except those who attended the trial at Limoges.

"Then you affirm that the letter in my name was a forgery committed by Jaco?" asked Solignac.

"I do," was the answer.

"And you declare that Alexandres and Julius did go after and obtained the money?" he continued.

"I do," answered the abbot.

Solignac then came forward and asked the judge not to consider the slightest imputation against the character of the abbot, whom he highly respected and honored, and said that he was convinced that the acts of certain

of the monks were unknown to him. All of the judges, without exception, agreed with the lord, and the abbot bowed his acknowledgment.

Now Hugues was called upon to testify. The bishop said, "Beware of perjury." "No," retorted Solignac, "he will not follow thy example." A fierce and defiant glance at the lord was all that the bishop deigned to give. In a clear voice the Lord of Chalus began to relate the whole story as he had repeated it before. Nothing was omitted. The attempt to assassinate and all was given clearly, but in a simple way. When he was asked what ought to be done to the Benedictines, his answer was, "Convert them."

Lord Solignac now came forward and testified as to the trial by judicial combat and the bravery of his client and the cowardice of Robert de Nevers, who had sought to take every unfair advantage, and that the strokes of Hugues were simply to disarm his adversary. All this and the gift of the money was stated to the satisfaction of the court.

The bishop, seeing the turn affairs had taken, declared himself delighted and convinced of the innocence of Hugues, whom he said he always accounted a most holy and excellent man, deserving the respect and honor of all the Church. There was only one thing on which he was not satisfied, and he hoped that for the welfare of his most excellent order, as well as for the good of the Church, the charge of his being in league with the devil would yet be cleared up. The shrewd bishop thought that here was a "terra incognita," in which no proof could be brought to the contrary.

Before Hugues came under the influence of Etienne he had performed many wonderful feats of valor, going out single-handed and capturing a band of robbers himself, entering into lists and coming off victor always, and

sometimes under the most peculiar circumstances; and when asked how he was able to do it, he used to say in a joke that "the devil helped him." In this way the story was started of his being in league with the evil one. So the bishop asked him "if ever in his life he had confessed that the devil helped him." "Yes," said Hugues, "before I came under the influence of Etienne, but never since." He was then asked "if it were true that the devil helped him." He said, "No; he had never prayed to the devil, but was constantly praying to God to deliver him from the power of the devil." The bishop continued, "How is it, then, my son, that thou hast been able to meet and overcome so many?" For in the recent attacks he was outnumbered three to one. He replied, "I am armed with right and my cause is just, and God strengthens my hands."

The bishop then recounted the affair of the morning and asked to have the monks brought in to testify. Solignac consented on condition that they should be given back to his custody after the testimony had been taken. The bishop claimed that the court there assembled should try them, and to this the associate judges agreed. So, against Lord Solignac's will, they were brought into court. There were ten monks (the one who had run away had come back to Limoges, and with the other nine made the full number). They all began to testify against Hugues in the most severe way, telling of his violence and of his being possessed of the devil. They feared no one but the devil. It began now to look as if this testimony would turn the tide against Hugues. Leo was brought forward as a witness, and declared exactly how the affair of the morning took place. But what seemed incredible was that seven, and altogether ten, monks should be were driven about by Hugues as a herd of sheep. The monks attributed this to the help of the devil,

and the two ecclesiastics agreed with the bishop that they were unable to decide conscientiously otherwise. On Leo's being questioned further, he said that if long-continued prayers, if deeds to mortify the body, if unceasing care for others and continual kindness and amiability were signs of being in league with the devil, then Hugues might be in that case; but that all the monks of the monastery of Grandmont considered Hugues as the most devout and holy of all the brothers after Etienne. "That may be," said the bishop, sagely shaking his head. "Do we not read that the devil himself often appears as an angel of light?"

Solignac was sore perplexed what to do. The lay judges also were nonplussed, for they did not know whether it was of the devil or not. The ecclesiastical authorities claimed to be the sole judges in such matters, and they were ready to pronounce against Hugues on this subject. Hugues simply protested against all of this and was silent. Solignac now wished to call the prior to give some evidence, but no word had been brought in concerning him. Accordingly Solignac began to openly accuse the Benedictines of cheating and of hiding him away or allowing him to escape, but they denied and swore that they knew nothing about him further than that he had asked permission to pray at the shrine of Ste. Valérie, and they had allowed him. Since then he had not been seen. Solignac declared that, as an important witness had been spirited away, Hugues must be vindicated. The others said no. The testimony of Hugues and the monks who had made the attack in the morning was naturally directly opposite. Because of the number so overwhelming on one side the judges did not see how they could decide any other way, and, though Leo's bleeding arm was shown and the knife with which the act was done, bearing the Benedictine brand upon

it, was brought forward, it seemed impossible to the judges that ten monks, with the most solemn oaths upon their lips, could be false. All this was impressively stated by the bishop, who declared that he was willing that Hugues should have every chance to prove his innocence. He said this because he felt sure that he could find out some way to condemn his enemy.

Solignac had to agree that there was rank perjury somewhere, and that either the ten monks were false or else Hugues and Leo had forsworn themselves. There was no charge against Leo, and, as he had only stated what he saw and believed, all agreed that nothing could be alleged against him. Again Solignac took the stand and swore how he had met the band, but the question how one unarmed man, without the devil's help, could drive nine men like sheep with only two bound was more than even he could answer. He now proposed a question to the bishop as follows: "As you, sir, by your life and studies are more familiar with divine things than I, please tell me if the angels or saints do not help those whom they love? Did not the prophet of old strike the whole army of the Syrians blind? And did not the weakling David slay the giant Goliath? Why, then, should it be thought impossible for one man to overcome all of these?"

"Ah," replied the bishop, "the Syrians were all uncircumcised, the giant was a Philistine; but these monks are all good Christians."

There seemed to be no other way but to condemn Hugues. Finally, as a last resort, to save his client, whom he knew to be innocent, Solignac asked that the tests might be applied which were usually reserved for ecclesiastics. The bishop agreed to this, and ordered that the irons should be heated. The three days' delay was not required, as it had been given in preparation for the

trial. In a few moments, as soon as the swords could be heated, they were brought in. Nine swords red hot were fastened into an iron frame, and Hugues was ordered to walk over them with his naked feet, so that he should touch each one with his feet.

"Hold," cried Solignac; "the Benedictines have made the accusation, and it is no more than just that to prove their tale they should be willing to make a trial of their word. If they escape uninjured, I will not hesitate to ask Hugues to make the same trial.

"No," responded the bishop; "he is accused and he must make the trial."

The judges divided, the ecclesiastics saying that the accused must go first and the lay judges holding that it was the duty of those who made the accusation to pass first. Meanwhile the bishop, seeing that the accusers would be obliged to undergo the same treatment as Hugues, was alarmed. He thought that, as Hugues was greatly exhausted by his sickness, he might excuse him to save his friends, and said, "There is another test which, perhaps, is better than this; it is the trial of the cross." This consisted in having both the accused and the accusers fastened to a cross, the hands bound to the crosspiece and the feet on the upright, and letting them hang in that way until one or the other yielded to fatigue. All of the judges assented to the substitution of this mode of trial. Two crosses were ordered, one for a Benedictine and one for Hugues.

"No," said Solignac; "all the accusers of Hugues must stand the same test as they would make him suffer." All the judges, excepting the bishop, agreed to this. That decision made a great uproar among the Benedictines. Each one of the seven was quick to swear that he was not an accuser, that he had nothing against Hugues, that he had only repeated what the two who were bound

and the one who had attempted to liberate them had said. So one after another was willing to swear that Hugues was not possessed of the devil, thereby being excused. Even Alexandres and Julius were now trying to break down their own testimony, and declared that there was no evil in Hugues ; but it was not permitted. At last the judges decided that the two who were bound, together with the third who had been so violent in his assertion as to Hugues's guilt, with Alexandres and Julius on one side and Hugues on the other, should each be fastened to a cross in the way prescribed, and that the ones who were the first to succumb should be declared guilty. If Hugues yielded before the others, it was to be the sign of his guilt.

Hugues, who had been willing to walk over the swords, now came cheerfully forward to submit to this test. Six crosses were laid upon the ground just outside of the cathedral. Each one was first sprinkled with holy water, then each victim was placed with his back upon the cross, his hands stretched out to the full length and securely tied to the crossbeam, while his feet were fastened with stout ropes to the perpendicular post. When everything was ready, the judges came to see if all was correct. Solignac noticed that, while the cords of the five were of large rope, the cord that bound Hugues was so small that it would cut his hands and feet terribly. As the servants of the bishop had done the binding, it was seen that this was a plain attempt to make the trial of Hugues doubly hard. When attention was called to it, the excuse was given that the large cord was used up before reaching Hugues. "Well," said Solignac, "we will procure more of the same size that Hugues is bound with, and fasten all alike." He commanded his servants to bring immediately a sufficient quantity to bind all with the same kind of rope.

On further examination the crosses of the five were found to have a raised ridge or shelf just where the base of the spine would come, so that the unfortunate might gain a little rest, while Hugues's was perfectly plain. At Solignac's commands, and the assent of the lay judges, all the crosses were made alike, and the six men were bound by the vassals of the Lord of Aixe, as the most neutral of all, and no favors were shown. Just before the crosses were placed in position holy water was offered all to drink. Solignac insisted on tasting every cup, and found that that given to Hugues had a different taste from the rest, and threw it on the ground, calling the Benedictines names that were not very complimentary. The truth was that the holy water given to the five had a strong opiate in it that would allay their pain ; but Hugues's cup contained only pure water, and of this he took sparingly.

The moment now arrived, and the bishop came forward and prayed that they might have strength given them so that the guilty would be speedily manifested, and that the innocent might be saved much suffering. At the elevation of the bishop's staff all six of the crosses were simultaneously raised up and placed in the holes already prepared in the cathedral square.

From the very first Alexandres and Julius began to scream, first uttering curses on the head of Hugues, and then, when the tension became strong and severe, they yelled with rage and pain. This, in turn, gave way to confession, and they began to accuse themselves. The Benedictines were prepared for this, and at once offered them more of the opiate ; but Solignac said, "No ; nothing shall be given until the judges decide who is guilty." To this the judges all agreed, and the Benedictines tried to comfort, soothe, and restrain, but all to no effect. The suffering wretches begged to be killed

outright. As the strain and pain became greater, they began to tell the truth and swear that they knew nothing against Hugues, that they had perjured themselves. They declared Hugues was innocent of all they had accused him. After they had relieved their consciences about Hugues they began to tell all that they knew about the bishop, and opened up some scenes that made that dignitary turn purple with rage and shame, for they were, alas, too true.

To stop any more revelations he said that he, for one, was satisfied with the guilt of these two. As they had spoken false concerning him, he must certainly think that what they said about Hugues must be untrue also. So these two were taken down to suffer the punishment prescribed by the judgment before given. The other three were just coming out from under the effects of the opiate that they had received, and, beginning to feel the excruciating pain, they commenced to cry out for relief, declaring that Hugues was sending devils to torment them. "Ah, no," said Solignac; "this is a test of the devil, and it is the devil that is in you that makes you suffer. See Hugues! He has not yet winced, and he speaks in as natural a tone as if he were in his own cell at Grandmont." "O, it is Beelzebub," said they. "Ah, no," said Solignac; "Beelzebub does not cast out, but puts in, devils."

Clouds had covered the heavens all day, but just as the sun was about to sink behind the western hills he came out a few moments, and the beams fell so as to strike the cross on which Hugues was placed, illuminating it, giving it the appearance of a halo. "See," cried Solignac and some others, "God is illumining his saint." And the superstitious monks, seeing the light that surrounded his cross, began to weep and howl afresh, and one and all to confess that they were wrong and that

they were really seeking the life of Hugues. They turned and with bitter tears asked the forgiveness and pardon of the man they had persecuted and sought to kill.

Hugues was only too ready to grant them forgiveness, and commended them to God, telling the penitents to put their trust in him, to prepare their souls for eternity, and with much solemn discourse urged on them the necessity of full repentance, which they humbly sought. Calling for the judges, they confessed all their crimes, and asked to die after they had cleared so noble a saint as Hugues of all blame. The judges were unanimous in their decision. Instantly all were cut down. Hugues was at once embraced by the bishop, who in agony and tears kneeled down and asked his forgiveness for all that he had done, and declared that he would not rise until he had been pardoned by Hugues. Hugues assured him that he treasured no ill will against him, but after urging him to direct his flock in the paths of righteousness and truth, as Etienne had prescribed, he freely forgave him.

Now Hugues went before the judges and asked to be heard. Each one was anxious to grasp his hand and receive his blessing, for the shining of that beam illuminating the cross had convinced nearly all that a miracle had been performed, especially as it had shone on no other cross. The immediate effect upon the three others, all of whom looked hardier than Hugues, who was just a bundle of hard muscles, and whom the strain had been but slight, made them think that the saints had helped him, and they were ready now to do him any homage that he might ask from them. Solignac was so beside himself with joy that he wanted a "Te Deum" sung, and the bishop ordered it. When Hugues came once more before his judges, the bishop said, "Whatever you ask shall

be granted." "Well," said Hugues humbly, "if you will grant my request, it is that the lives of these poor wretches, who have been deceived as well as deceiving themselves, may be spared. They have perjured themselves and in their rage sought to commit murder and other crimes. All this is proof positive that they are not ready to enter eternity. I ask that they be not excommunicated, but that they be put on the bread of penitence for a year, and then be received back into their respective places if they have truly repented."

"I object to the granting of mercy," said the Lord of Aix. "Before the trial began we declared the sentence on those who should be proven guilty. Had Hugues been the guilty one, I am sure that no one would have asked the same favor for him; and now that these villains are shown doubly dyed in infamy, there is the stronger reason that they should be immediately sentenced, unless you wish to wait until the morrow, and then make the punishment all the more public."

The Vicomte de Limoges said that his inclinations sided with the Lord of Aix, but he wished to know just what Solignac thought. This lord had been silent since the acquittal of Hugues. Now he said that, while justice demanded all that the Lord of Aix had said, yet he would be more happy if the noble spirit of Hugues were taken as the sentiment of the court, being the most humane and Christian. He would recommend the judgment of Hugues. The bishop made a most laudatory speech about Hugues and extolled his character—"vindicated," he said, "by heaven"—and declared that this last testimony of Hugues was another evidence of the divine spirit. "Let us not fight against it, lest we be found fighting against God." This was finally accepted as the decision of the court.

The five culprits, coming before Hugues, knelt to re-

ceive his blessing, which he gave most readily, saying some words of comfort and strengthening the souls that had been so deluded and deceived. They were put in the care of their brother Benedictines, who had received such a fright that they regarded Hugues no more with envy, but as a veritable saint. Poor old Leo, lifting up his bloody arm, kept saying, "I knew it would be so, I knew it would be so ; for Etienne was praying all of the time."

Both Hugues and Leo wished to return home that night, but neither the bishop nor the vicomte would hear of it. They accepted the vicomte's hospitality, who invited the bishop to unite with him at the castle in a royal feast in honor of the vindication. The two guests of honor partook of none of the grand viands that were served on the occasion, their hearts were too full of gratitude. Lord Cocu, hearing of the trial, had been among the spectators in the court room ; but as soon as Hugues had been vindicated, seizing his hand, he said, "I shall hasten to tell Etienne," and, mounting his horse, within two hours he was at the side of the founder of the order at Grandmont, rehearsing all that had taken place.

The good man, as he listened to these things, could not refrain from saying, "God be thanked ! God be thanked !" and the tears rolled down his face. After hearing the account he immediately ordered the bell sounded, and the brothers were called together to hear the news and sing a "Te Deum" for the rescue of Hugues.

Lord Solignac was also invited to the vicomte's and accepted. While they were at the table, a loud rap was heard at the portcullis of the castle. Inquiries were made by the porter. It proved to be some of the vassals of the Lord of Aix, who wanted to speak with their master. He excused himself from the table and went

out to them. They told him that they had discovered the dead body of a monk, and, as they wished him to see it, they had brought it with them. They had found the corpse on the banks of the Vienne, not far from his castle. The lord imagined that it must be the missing prior; so he returned to the hall and told the company that the body of the prior had been found.

The feast was immediately stopped, and sorrow was expressed by all. No one was more sorrowful than the Lord of Solignac, who said that he had not wished to incriminate the man, but to frighten him into telling the whole truth. It was a sad procession that followed the corpse over to the cathedral, where they allowed it to rest, while brother Benedictines kept up a service all night. His death was thought to be accidental, for had it been known that he had committed suicide he would have been quartered and hung up in different parts of the city or over its several gates, and never been permitted a Christian burial. Many different stories were told. Some said he was trying to run away, others that he was brutally murdered, some that he became unconscious and fell into the water while praying on the banks of the river; but the real fact was never published, though the truth was surmised by the Benedictines themselves.

The Abbot of Solignac, assisted by the Bishop of Limoges, officiated at the funeral the next day. No word of eulogy was expressed by either. They only thought to hurry the service and commit the body to the earth. Hugues and Leo, after the funeral, accompanied by a number of Benedictines (who now were anxious to do all that they could for the two), started for Grandmont. Their escort went with them even to the monastery, and with them entered into the chapel to assist at the

service which Etienne had prepared to welcome them back. They even went so far as to go to Etienne himself and on bended knees beg his blessing and forgiveness, which the good man gave with great pleasure. Then, after a walk three times around the cemetery, the Benedictines returned, and a solemn vow was made that henceforth Etienne and his monks should never be molested. This vow was carefully kept, and the Abbot of Solignac himself brought back the one hundred sous to Etienne, and in a most humble manner asked his pardon and forgiveness. But Etienne said : "Brother, the fault was not thine, and thou art free. Come, let us both unite in a service to heaven, thanking God for his goodness, and ask that he will henceforth keep our orders from falling into sin." After this service and much brotherly conference they parted, bound together by new and strong ties of friendship, which lasted as long as they lived. This was the end of the trial that threatened to break up the order of Grandmont.

CHAPTER XXI.

THE CLOVEN HOOF.

ABOUT this time there appeared in all France, and especially at Limoges, that terrible scourge called the "pest," which was likened by a chronicler to a fire which burned all parts of the body indifferently. This terrible disease attacked all classes. As nearly everybody had been following their own evil propensities, they fell an easy prey to the scourge. It is certain that not only bad morals, but the filth in which most of the people lived aided in spreading this plague over the country with such destructive power. From the accounts given it is difficult to imagine anything much more painful or which could cause more intense agony. The disease would attack certain parts of the body, perhaps the hand, the feet, the limbs, or trunk, and they would feel as if literally burned in a furnace. The afflicted would beg to have the stricken parts cut off, and it was currently reported that when water was thrown on them smoke would arise and the suffering would be intensified. The disease worked until a vital organ was attacked, whereupon death would speedily follow.

On every side were heard the cries of the burning, maddened patients. Every street resounded with groans and agony day and night. These screams of anguish went up unceasingly, and wherever the eye turned there were seen the writhing of the suffering, desolation, and death.

There was, perhaps, never a time when the Church did more for humanity in a way that appealed directly to the

people than on such occasions as this. The disease seemed to be more infectious than contagious, and the attacks were more violent upon debauchees and those persons who were neglected and whose surroundings were deep in filth and vileness. Sanitary principles were unknown, and the results of uncleanness, both moral and physical, made themselves apparent when an epidemic declared itself.

At that date the study of medicine had made very little progress, and was confined to blood letting and the use of a few herbs. The beneficial effects of the bath were unknown. Many never took one; some bathed only once or twice a year in the river during the warm weather. Indeed, dirt and uncleanness were the order of the day.

Etienne had learned from his stay in Rome the importance of the bath, and had prescribed as a rule for his followers weekly ablutions. This he considered typical of spiritual purity, and, as a consequence, the monks of Grandmont were scrupulously clean. Therefore none of the monks of Etienne were attacked. They were now in great demand everywhere to soothe the sick and bury the dead.

It is strange to see how many of the old pagan customs still clung to the people. There were certain springs that had been resorted to from time immemorial as possessed of healing virtues. The old Druids worshiped around them. At the advent of the Romans they called these fountains after their gods and goddesses, so that we find springs dedicated to Hygeia, Diana, Venus, the Graces, etc. These, in turn, were for the most part called by the names of saints when the country was brought under the sway of Christianity. Some, however, were considered unholy. On Lord Cocu's estate, not very far from where the castle stood,

was a large monument or mound, one of the many *tumuli* that are found all over the central part of France even at the present time. Near the foot of this *tumulus* was a spring of clear, cold running water. A vague superstition was current concerning this spring, that it issued from a pagan sepulcher where human sacrifices had been offered; therefore it was impure and a sin to drink of the water. As the *tumulus* had never to that day been opened, it was supposed that it was the burial place of a certain chieftain, whose name had been as long forgotten as his bones. There was a tradition handed down, however, that this chief was in league with the devil, and that report started strange rumors of ghosts. Strange sounds and sights had been heard and seen at night by travelers who had occasion to take the road that passed by this mound.

It happened that one of the servants of Lord Cocu, stricken with this pest, went at once to this heathen place, as it was called, and not only bathed, but held his feet in the waters and drank copiously of them; and, wonderful to relate, in a few days he had entirely recovered from the attack and was able to attend to his work.

The news quickly spread, and not only the servants, but all stricken with the plague in the neighborhood came and bathed in and drank the waters. Bathing in the spring proved a preventive, and soon the fountain became famous.

This happened to be one of those springs forbidden to be touched or drunk because of the belief that it had been dedicated to an ancient heathen god. Etienne was much surprised when he heard from Lord Cocu what had been done, and, as his advice was asked on the matter, thought it would be best to fill up the fountain so that people might not defile themselves.

"But," said Lord Cocu, "I have seen its healing power, and I know that it does keep people from having the pest."

Etienne replied that he would pray over the matter. Meanwhile the people continued bathing in the waters and were benefited. It will not be necessary for us to go into an analysis of the water, but it was a fact that the persons who bathed in it were kept from the disease. As other water increased the suffering, it doubtless contained mineral properties. What was important at that time was the uncertainty as to the source of the healing power—whether due to saints or the devil; for according to their ideas one or the other must have the glory.

It was thought that a crushing argument against the divine authorship of the healing power was that it should proceed from a heathen tomb. The souls of those buried in the tumulus were represented to be at that instant in hell. Some even suggested that the reason it cured was because it proceeded from infernal depths, and, as the disease was thought to be the work of the evil one, so the curative properties of this spring must have something devilish about them. But as the water was cold, again their logic was baffled, for according to their reasoning the water ought to be hot. Another thing urged against it was that on certain cold mornings the appearance of smoke was seen hanging over the orifice where the water issued from the mound. The curé of Ambazac had no doubt that it was the devil's breath and forbade his parishioners going to the spring, but Etienne was not quite so bigoted. He gave to the lord a wooden cross which had been dipped in holy water. "Take this cross to the spring," said Etienne, "cast it in, and if it floats the water is good; if it sinks, it is evil."

Cocu, well content with the test, called together a

number of witnesses. Etienne sent Hugues to the scene to watch the proceedings and to report to him.

The cross was placed in the bubbling spring and immediately it went dancing off. The people shouted with delight, as they now thought that the floating cross was a sure sign that the water was good, and that they might use it for drinking and bathing. The curé rescinded his edict, but the spring was thought to be of too doubtful a source to receive the name of a saint; so nothing was said about it one way or the other. Strange stories were told about this fountain—how that every night at full moon imps and demons came forth, who held a carnival on the top of the *tumulus*, which was about thirty feet high. As the place was carefully avoided and most of the stories were hearsay, after the test of the cross they were somewhat disregarded. An old crone told this tale to a new servant at the castle to frighten her. Let her tell her own story:

“I was born a vassal to the grandfather of the present Lord Cocu. When about eighteen I became greatly enamored of a young archer of the Lord of Jonchière, named Berton. Our trysting place was at the foot of the *tumulus*, and whenever it was possible for my lover to come I met him there, as my parents had already promised me to one of their fellow-servants who was bound to Lord Cocu. But night after night I would creep out under the lofty pine that grew at the foot of the side opposite to where rumor said was the mouth of the cave. I would await Berton, and many a time he kissed me and in most loving words bade me a fond good-night, and spoke of the time when he hoped to have me as his wife. Everything was progressing most smoothly and pleasantly. It was just as the moon was full in late autumn; the rain had ceased at nightfall, and it was clear and beautiful. I went, as I was wont, to meet

Berton. I heard his footsteps rustling the fallen leaves, and began to sing softly a love ditty of welcome. Just as he came in sight the whole top of the *tumulus* seemed to be alive. There was a roar, and all the leaves seemed sweeping down its side in the wake of an enormous creature, clothed in black. It passed by me like an arrow and started for Berton, who turned and ran, the evil spirit pursuing him. They seemed borne by the wings of the wind. As soon as they were out of sight I ran to the house as fast as ever I could, and from that day to this I have never spent a moment after twilight anywhere near the foot of the *tumulus*, which I firmly believe is possessed with the devil. I never afterward saw Berton. Some said that he was shortly after killed in battle, but I believe that he was carried away by the fiend that lived in that mound."

Her story made a deep impression upon the minds of her credulous hearers, and the younger persons who heard it resolved that henceforth it would be no trysting place for them.

In reality the girl's father had hidden himself on the high summit of the mound, from whose top he could watch all that was going on below without being seen, as the summit was covered with small trees and shrubs. When he saw his daughter's lover approach, he descended hastily. The leaves being stirred up made it seem that there was a multitude coming, and he chased Berton to the border of the castle, returning to find his daughter in bed, frightened so terribly that for him to expose the truth would be to diminish the force of the lesson. So it was never repeated. Berton did not dare to come again to the trysting place, and soon was sent on a warlike expedition, so frequent at this time, where he met his death. The girl was content to marry the suitor of her parents' choice, and so the matter

ended. But never was the fright forgotten, and many were the weird stories told of the mound and the speculations made concerning it. The tradition runs thus :

A pagan chief, noted for his cruelty and hardiness, whose daily diet was human flesh and blood drunk from the skull of one of his enemies, built this mound himself, and one day, having called his son, resigned his kingdom and power to him, forbidding him to search for him, as he was about to disappear from the world. He walked straight up to this *tumulus*, where a door opened apparently of itself, through which the chieftain entered and was never seen thereafter. No trace could ever be seen of the door, and the sod grew all over the steep side. No one ever dared to break the privacy of the chief.

Hugues heard all these stories and was greatly troubled, for he thoroughly believed that the devil bought certain people, who were under his power, so that they could do many strange and unexplainable things. He also thought that certain injuries could be done to people through the influence of the devil. For example, when one wished to destroy a field of grain belonging to an enemy, it was only necessary to get an egg and have certain incantations performed over it, then hide it in the field of grain, and that would certainly bring upon it disaster. There were many such superstitions that were received as Gospel truth at that time. Though Hugues gave credence to these tales, still, as Etienne had so often told him that God was much stronger than the devil, he felt that he had divine power on his side, and he never feared even the devil himself as long as he had his cross and staff with him.

He returned to Grandmont and repeated all that he had seen and heard. Etienne was a little inclined, as were all of that remote age, to be superstitious, and ad-

vised that the stream be avoided, as none of the saints ought to meddle with evil things, even though there was no apparent harm.

"But," replied Hugues, "it is certain that the cross floated and danced just as well on that water as it does on what your holy hands have blessed. Permit me, then, to go up there at the next full moon and watch, and if devils or ghosts come I shall know it, and we can then intelligently advise the people."

"How dare you face the devil if, perchance, you find him there?" asked Etienne.

"He cannot harm me. I carry the cross upon my breast, and I have the promise, as you have said so often, of the aid of the holy angels if aught befalls me, so that I need fear no ill. He will not touch me. I am not afraid.

The simple, childlike faith of Hugues pleased Etienne, and, embracing him warmly, he said: "Tell no one thy mission. Go, and the Lord send his angels to defend thee."

That night week the moon was full, and five vassals of the neighborhood had made up their minds to have some fun with the superstitious people of the region, who had determined to appoint a watch to see whether there were any appearances on top of the mound or not. These miscreants had each gotten a cow's hide with the horns on, and with these as disguises they intended to dance on the mound and make so great a hubbub that all the neighborhood would hear and be frightened.

The determination of Hugues was as unknown to them as theirs was to him.

At sunset on that day Hugues, with his staff and cross, went from Grandmont to the *tumulus*. No one saw him, as he approached from the opposite side of the castle, which was situated at some distance from the dangerous

and infected spot. He was soon out of sight beneath the branches of a fir tree on the top. He began to repeat the services of the Church to himself, as he did not want to make a noise that would attract attention. He had been very active all day, and the repetition of the service was mechanical and the effect soothing to his mind. The wind blew softly, and it was not long before the former Lord of Chalus was fast asleep, for there was no terror for him. He dreaded nothing, and was more than half inclined to believe that very much of what he had heard was nonsense and fable. He slept soundly, hushed by the soft sighing of the wind in the fir trees. There he lay, perfectly at ease, unconscious of all surroundings, dreading in no way the terrible demon that was said to haunt those regions.

On the mountain side, about half a mile from the mound, the rascals who were planning to give the neighbors a fright had their rendezvous.

"Jacques, you look like a veritable demon with the black and white hide of old Cornie on," said Pierre, as he fastened the horns in such a way that they stood upright on his companion's head. "Now let me fix the tail, and you will be ready."

This last necessary appendage to a well-formed cow was cunningly forked, and made by the help of a stout stick to assume a right angle to the body.

"Fasten the skin well," said Jacques, "for I do not want it to come off in the midst of our fun."

"Aye, aye," said Pierre, and with a stout needle he sewed the skin over the limbs, around the body, and over the shoulders, fastening it around the head securely.

"Now let me fasten Blackie's hide on you," said Jacques; and Blackie, whose skin was the color of a raven's wing, was brought up and arranged so as to

cover Pierre in the same way that his comrade Jacques had been covered. Another brindle hide, that had been the covering of a bullock, was made to do the same service for Emile, and a yellow skin for Rougier. Gers was incased in a white one. These five fellows, thus arrayed, pictured to themselves any amount of fun.

"I say, Jacques," called out Gers, "Father Joannes will be out with his holy water to-night."

"And I assure you the devil himself would run if he saw us," cried Rougier.

At this they all laughed. "Jacques, you be the chief fiend, and we will obey all of your commands," said Pierre.

"All right," exclaimed the others.

"Let us all walk up to the top of the hill just before midnight, and as the bells of Grandmont sound twelve let us all raise a shout that will bring out the terrified people of the castle to be our audience, and when we see them coming let us make a lively dance. After that I will make an address, while the rest of you go dancing around, shaking your horns and kicking up your heels. Be sure to show the cloven hoofs and the long forked tails," said Jacques. "They will call up the curé, and as he comes with his cross let us make most horrible grimaces and rush down the hill toward him, and snatched the cross out of his hands. If he resists, we will make him give it up, and after planting it on top of the mound each of us by different ways will go back to our rendezvous and return in our ordinary clothes to hear the tales about the apparitions. How will that do for a plan?"

"Ah, first class," cried all. "Jacques, you were born to be a great general. No doubt some day you will be a great man," cried one and all.

"Ah," said Gers; "would it not be well to burn a little brimstone, so as to make them think it is the smell of the pit for sure?"

"Well thought of," said Jacques; "but where can we get any?"

"I brought a piece with me that might do," replied Gers, and he showed some crude sulphur in a lump as large as his hat.

"Ah, that is splendid; but how shall we get the coals?" asked another.

"I will just run down to Mother Blondel's, and she will be so frightened when she sees me that she will fly screaming from the house to the castle. When she is out, I will take coals off the hearth," answered Rougier.

"Try it," said Jacques.

The plan worked well. When Rougier appeared in the door, the poor frightened woman rushed out through a window and ran toward the castle, screeching at the top of her voice. While she was gone, Rougier took the coals and carried them in an iron vessel to the company.

Poor Mother Blondel had not the power to scream any more, but fell against the door when the portcullis was raised, and fainted dead away. It was some time before she came to herself, and then all she could say was, while continually crossing herself, "The devil! the devil! I have seen the devil!"

The servants thought she was demented or something strange had happened. Father Joannes was sent for, and he came with the cross and holy water, a sure way to exorcise the devil. She had gained a little coherency, and described the cause of her fright:

"As I sat knitting I heard a sort of growl at the door, and as I opened it to look out, lo! in came the horns and cloven foot of the devil himself. O, I waited for

no more. Thanks to the saints and the holy Virgin, the window was open, and I leaped through and was off in a minute. I am sure he is there now."

All went with Father Joannes to the cottage to see the curé put out the fire with holy water, exorcise the devil, and sprinkle the whole house. The cloven footprints in the ashes were unmistakable, and he tried to make Mother Blondel confess that she had been guilty of witchcraft or of some other crime, but she stoutly denied everything. As all saw her fear, they believed what she said, and thought that she would henceforth shun the devil with all the power she possessed.

It was agreed that Father Joannes should stay at the castle that night ; and, as Mother Blondel refused positively to remain in her house, she found a place in the servants' quarters.

CHAPTER XXII.

EXORCISING THE DEMONS.

IT was now near midnight. The five mischief-makers had started from their mountain covert and were silently wending their way toward the mound. Every one of them was a little afraid, for each had a misgiving that evil spirits did inhabit the mound, and not one of them would have thought of going up there alone at midnight, but the company gave each one courage. Jacques's orders were that they should go up the mound with the least noise possible and silently arrange themselves on the castle side, to be the more easily seen, and at the first stroke of the bell they would put the coals to the sulphur and begin to shriek with all their lung power.

This was agreed to by all, and they noiselessly ascended the mound on the opposite side from where the innocent Hugues was wrapt in slumber. He did not hear them, and they sat silently until the bell at midnight began to ring. It is still the custom in many portions of France for the bells to ring the hour twice. The twelve strokes are given, and then after a few moments repeated, for fear that the first time shall have served only to waken the sleepers, or lest a stroke was forgotten or lost.

At the first stroke of the bell the coals, still kept alive by the care and blowing of Rougier, were thrown upon the ground, and the huge lump of sulphur was placed on top. A few dry sticks and leaves brought it into a glow, and the wind, which was in a favorable di-

rection, blew the smoke and fumes over toward the quarters of the vassals and the castle.

The smell of sulphur somewhat aroused Hugues, and he was fully awakened by the terrible shriek that the pseudo-demons gave. He was calm and collected, although the sight was truly startling. There were what appeared to be five imps of Satan dancing most wildly, and their tails, which had the hair separated at the tip by a stick with a crotch, looked as if they were forked, and the cloven feet, with the smell of burning sulphur, made him think that he was in a very uncanny spot, to say the least.

He reasoned with himself that if he were to rise up it might interrupt the performance; so, crossing himself and grasping his staff strongly, he was ready for service at a moment's notice, and waited to see what the fiends would do.

The yell had the anticipated effect. The doors of the vassals' cottages were opened. The occupants, in their night attire, came rushing out; came also the Lord of Cocu, the curé, Joannes, together with all of the inmates of the castle except Mother Blondel, who crept under her bed and did nothing but cross herself and count her beads and moan.

"O, the mound is possessed surely!" exclaimed Lord Cocu.

"Smell the brimstone!" cried Father Joannes.

"I see the flames coming up straight from the pit!" shouted a third.

"O, what shall we do?" cried the bride of Cocu, who had come out half-dressed.

Lord Cocu, who was not one of the bravest persons in the world, asked the curé to go forth and expel the devil from his domain.

"No," said the curé, "I will not go alone; but do you

gather all in a company, and I will give each a little holy water, which the devil hates, and with this, I bearing the cross and a deacon bearing the pyx, we will approach within a hundred paces, and I will call upon the devils to depart."

This was agreed to. All of the company were bidden to chant the praises of St. Martial and to advance to within one hundred paces of the mound. The smoke now was terrible. The creatures dancing in the smoke seemed to be surrounded or coming out of it. Everyone shrank back, and the chant was the most cracked and forced kind of music that ever was sung or screamed; for there was no song, only a scream. Everybody hung back, looking for the best place to run. Meanwhile the sight of the dancing demons was more horrible than ever.

Hugues had remained perfectly motionless, watching the strange antics. He had coolly noted every movement. He saw that the cloven feet were only skin, for he could see the wooden shoes, or *sabots*, underneath. He began to think that there was something of a hoax about it after all. Now and then he saw that the horns wiggled as if they were loose, and once, when Pierre frisked too near the fire, there was a smell of singed hair that no one could mistake.

The time had not yet arrived for him to act, he thought. While he waited, the dragging company under the lead of the venerable father advanced, all hanging back. The curé asked all to go ahead, and he would bring up the rear with the sacred ensigns. The others said, "No; you, who have the power over the devil, should go first." So they went as if each one expected to have the devil come rushing down and seize him in particular and bear him off to the infernal regions. At last, though over two hundred paces away from the mound, the curé declared that they were near

enough. As he knelt down to pray, a loud, harsh voice from the mount shouted, "Stand up, Curé Joannes!" and, trembling with fear, the old man arose, while the rest shrank back in terror and began to scream.

"Silence!" shouted the one who seemed to be the chief demon. All was as still as death in the company below, but Hugues heard a chuckle that was too earthly to be mistaken for a Satanic laugh.

"For twelve centuries," cried the speaker Jacques, who was the chief devil on the occasion, "I have slept in peace, awaking every month to call my fellow-demons to a conference on my tomb. Though the suns of summer and the winds and snows of winter have come and passed so many hundred times, no one has dared to violate the sanctity of my tomb, no one has ventured to disturb me or to drink or bathe in the waters that are so sacred to me. Within the last moon multitudes have come and not only drunk but bathed in these waters, which are a part of my life. I have called my brethren from the pit, and, as you see, there is a little smell of brimstone attached to them; it drops from our hands." So saying, he dipped the hoof into the liquid sulphur and let it drop in great burning drops down before the assembly, who fell shrieking back. "Do not dare run until I give you leave," cried the demon, "or I will send a legion who will hurl you headlong down into the pit that has its mouth at my feet."

"O don't, don't," they all cried, the poor curé yelling in agony.

"I demand reparation," continued the demon. "I must have the most solemn pledge that my domains shall not be violated."

"We all promise. We will do anything if you will only let us alone," cried the curé.

"I demand more," said the heartless demon. "I must have the sacerdotal robes of the curé to take as a trophy to the pit. I must have his cross and the pyx as the pledge of your faithfulness."

"O no," gasped the priest; "do not take those holy things. They can do you no good."

"But I must have them or you," answered the fiend; at which his companions began to shout, "We must have him, we must have him; we'll roast his bones on sulphurous stones, and drink his blood from the chalice."

"O ye saints, help me," cried the curé, falling tremblingly on his knees.

Just now Hugues, who had seen all and was sure that it was only some wicked men trying to play their tricks upon the people at the expense of the poor curé, came softly out from behind the fir tree. When the crowd saw him, they thought that he was another devil. The mischievous villains, so intent on watching the crowd, did not notice him until he had cracked the heads of Gers and Rougier together with such force that they lost their horns and lay prone on the ground. Jacques turned around just in time to receive the weight of the staff, and he fell over. Pierre and Emile shouted, "It is the devil in earnest," and started on a run for the crowd, who ran screaming and yelling in all directions; but the most frightened of all were the rascals who had gotten up the scare.

The curé had fallen, unable to run, and was calling on the saints to help him. Hugues stood over the prostrate three and, calling to the people and the curé not to be afraid, said: "Come here. I am a Christian and a monk. I am Hugues, who has come to see if these are really devils. I find them only wicked men who mock holy things. Come here and see them."

It took a great deal of persuasion to get the people

and the curé up the mound. After awhile Lord Cocu ascended the *tumulus*, then the curé, and finally the others. The villains who perpetrated the joke were compelled to assume their disguise and appear the next day before Lord Cocu. It was not half so funny appearing before the angry lord the next morning in their cowhide robes, with the horns and tails displayed where they would show the most advantageously.

No small audience was assembled at the trial, either. There were but three to be tried—those who had been knocked down by Hugues. The other two had made good their escape, and, managing to free themselves from their bovine coverings, had gotten as far away from the dangerous place as their limbs could take them.

No witnesses were needed at the trial. All were there, shouting and jeering at the culprits, who looked as thoroughly ashamed as it was possible for men to look.

The sentence of the lord was that the three should be taken out to the highway between the chateau and Ambazac, and with their cow-skin garb be placed in the stocks for three days, while their food was to be nothing but coarse black bread and water. The worst part of such a punishment was that it gave free license to the rabble to abuse them as their disposition directed, and the crowd was in no humor after the fright to be very lenient. The amount of mud and filth that was heaped on them, to say nothing of blows, bodily chastisement, and opprobrious names, made the wretches very sorry that the idea of a joke had ever penetrated their brains.

There was nothing to do but to bear it, and the cow skins served as a good protection from much of the fury; but it was a long time before they were able to settle down in peace again. Indeed, the poor old woman who was

so badly frightened refused to return to her cottage unless the curé would sprinkle the whole interior of the house again with holy water, and at the same time burn incense and place a statue of the Virgin over the door. This was done, but for many nights the old woman expected to see the evil one walk bodily into her house and take her away.

The effect of this night on the people divided the sentiment. Some, like Hugues, were convinced that there was nothing the matter with the water or the mound, while others were more certain than ever that the mound was a veritable rendezvous for demons.

Hugues, after explaining that the mound was perfectly innocent, and showing the cause of the whole matter, and being fully satisfied that the perpetrators of the joke would get their just deserts, hastened down to Etienne to tell all that had happened, and even that grave monk had to smile as he heard the story repeated by the matter-of-fact Hugues. Thanks were solemnly given for the kind preservation of Providence. As all the monks were assembled in the little chapel, there was a great noise heard outside, and a man, out of breath and bleeding, rushed into the assembly and up to the altar, before which he knelt. Loud and angry voices were heard at the door, which was violently opened, and before the monks were able to resume their usual gravity and senses a voice called out in tones that at once stopped the worship, "Come here, you murderer, you thief, you villain!" and many other names that were more forcible than elegant.

The wretch who was kneeling at the altar seemed determined to do anything else but obey. He was shivering like an aspen leaf. The service was quickly ended, the monks were dismissed to their cloisters, and Hugues was sent to parley with the intruders, while Etienne went

to the side of the trembling fugitive. Hugues did not get along well. The Count of Rochechouart was in no mood to listen to reason. He was determined to have the blood of the rascal who had successfully eluded him until this moment. Only that morning had he discovered his hiding place in the mountains, but the man had taken to flight and ran as only those can run who have their lives dependent upon their heels. The only hope for the wretch lay in the monastery of Etienne, as that was protected by the pope himself and was free from any authority excepting the papal ; and so it was a sort of city of refuge, where even the guilty might come and escape their pursuers.

CHAPTER XXIII.

A REFUGEE.

THE whole trouble had arisen in the following way : Pierre, a younger son of the Lord of Dorat, had gone with the crusaders to the Holy Land. He had seen considerable of the hardships of that ineffectual fight, and had suffered from the inhospitality of the Hungarians and the treachery of the Greeks. He had spent some time in Asia Minor, had taken part in the taking of Antioch, and had come back with the idea that on account of what he had done he was entitled to plenary indulgence in every kind of sin and wickedness that his nature might choose to commit. He had been so long accustomed to pay but little attention to the laws which govern *meum* and *tuum* that it became second nature for him to take whatever he wanted without saying, "By your leave." This little failing, which modern philanthropists have covered up with a mantle of Greek, if not of charity, under the term "kleptomania," which sounds in the ears of the culprit much better than the word "stealing," was the great trouble with Pierre.

His extensive travels and the standing of his family gained him admission into almost any castle in France. He had made the most of the hospitality that was extended to him, and his great fund of anecdote and adventure made his company very desirable, and though after his departure valuable articles might be missing, the theft was not, as a rule, laid to his charge.

He had returned to Marseilles, and from there passed

up through what is now termed the Midi of France toward Dorat; but his oriental life had made him indolent, and as he was having a good time he was in no great hurry to get home, especially as he knew that Dorat was a large area of uncultivated land in a very inhospitable section of France, where unruly serfs demanded constant attention, and where there was a chance for little else besides hard work.

The gallant had assumed the then popular rôle of a troubadour, and with his voice accompanied his instrument, generally a guitar, first telling of battles and wonderful exploits. The tales he told seemed to rival Hercules, especially as he was so mighty in killing lions and immense serpents.

At the Castle de la Barrière in Perigord, where he stopped for a long while, he tuned his strings to a softer lay than battles. The eldest daughter of the count was a very beautiful girl, and it was not hard work for the warrior-poet to win her favor, especially as men were rather scarce, the flower having departed to the Holy Land.

He had repeated all his fictitious adventures and recounted all his stories, and yet he could not tear himself away. He began to sing to the lady's eyelids, and his metaphors took another turn. He compared her brow to the snows of Lebanon, her lips to the rubies of Sinai, her eyes to the blue sky of Syria, her laughter to the rippling of the Jordan, her grace to the gentle gazelle, her voice to the whispering of the palm trees.

He was going on at this rate when the count overheard him, and commanded a long pause in the music, and ordered the young gallant to leave the Castle de la Barrière as far behind as possible. The young lady shed a few tears, but she was not allowed to grieve very much, as another soon came along less objectionable to the parents, and she was happy again.

But Pierre had kept his eyes open while at the castle and had seen where the plate was stored, and in his flight he took good care to take as mementoes of his stay at Perigord as much of the gold and silver plate as he could find. He started early in the morning for Rochechouart, but before leaving he took particular pains to go to the inclosure where the count kept his horses and select the best one, which he mounted and was soon galloping away at a lively pace. He reached that castle just before the drawbridge was raised, and, as his father was an intimate friend of the family, he received a very hearty welcome. The guest chamber was provided for him, and after the dinner he began to repeat his stories.

He soon caught the eye and the heart of a younger daughter of the count, and the old stories of the snows of Lebanon, rippling Jordan, and Syrian sky were repeated with greater emphasis; and, as the Count of Rochechouart was a busy man, the troubadour had plenty of opportunities to tell "his oft-repeated tale." Indeed, he had made such progress that he determined to sue boldly for the daughter's hand.

The next day there was to be a great hunting party, and after the return was the time selected by the troubadour to tell his tale of love to the count. The hunt passed off successfully. Pierre never left his lady's side, ever breathing sweet nothings in her ear, and she returned them with just such a smile as her sister eight hundred years younger does to-day.

After the dinner, when the wine had been plentifully supplied, Pierre began his attack on the paternal heart. The Count of Rochechouart was a plain, matter-of-fact, business sort of a man. He was anxious for his daughter and did not think that she could do much better than to take the son of the Lord of Dorat, but at the same time he wanted to know exactly how his child would be

placed. So he asked the young suitor how he could support a wife, and all such questions. Pierre responded that he had gained much in Palestine, that he intended to buy out his elder brother, and that money was no particular object to him, as he intended going back to Palestine with a guard to get thousands of pounds that he had hidden away, unable to bring with him. As a proof he displayed some of the gold and silver plate that he had stolen from Perigord and other places. The rascal had tried to batter out all traces of the crests of the houses from which he had stolen the goods, but his flight from Perigord was so precipitate that he had not had very much time. The count called his attention to one piece that had the crest of Barrière stamped on it; but the rogue, not abashed, said that the count had forced him to take that piece as a memento of his stay at his castle. This seemed very plausible, and the father said that he would carefully consider the matter; meantime, the young people might consider themselves betrothed.

The joy was very great in the castle, a feast was celebrated in honor of the young people's happiness, and all seemed to go on well.

When Pierre had left Perigord, the loss was not discovered for several days. It was thought that the horse had broken out and strayed away, and as the gold and silver were not used every day, it was not until the servants went to polish the articles that they were missed. It was then some time before the suspicion could be laid upon anyone, and then a poor blind beggar, who could not tell a gold service from a tin wash basin, was blamed and was now in the dungeon waiting to be tried for the theft, and, if guilty, he was to be hung. No one thought of accusing Pierre.

But it so happened that the Counts of Perigord and

Rochechouart were to meet to arrange some matter. The meeting took place just after the night of the betrothal, and in the course of the conversation the Count of Rochechouart recounted the fact of the betrothal of the younger son of the Lord of Dorat to his daughter, and incidentally mentioned the gold plate. This made the master of Barrière listen, and he insisted on going over and seeing the young man, which he and the intended father-in-law proceeded to do.

Pierre and his affianced were out with a party hawking when the two counts arrived. Without ceremony they went up to the guest chamber and began to ransack the packages of Pierre. There they found the articles which bore the marks of different castles. When questioned as to the horse that the young man rode, it was found to be the very horse that was missing from Barrière.

The Count of Rochechouart was now very angry. He vowed that the thief, who had not only stolen the plate and horse of his friend, but was stealing his daughter, should be tried and executed. The counts at once started in pursuit of the party. An hour's gallop brought them to the spot where Pierre was showering his affection on the young lady, while they gave little attention to hawking or the party. The young people were so interested in themselves that they did not see the enraged father and his friend until they were upon them. Pierre was riding the stolen horse, his hand resting on the pommel of the young lady's saddle, their heads as close as they could be without losing their balance. The lovers were wholly oblivious of the storm, worse than any cyclone, that was sweeping on to engulf them.

A few sharp, startling words brought them back from Elysium to the hardest realities of life ; for what is there worse than discovering that one to whom you have given your heart's inmost treasure is as false as the father of

lies? Or what can be more terrible than, after leading successfully a life of deceit and feeling that the ground underneath the feet is firm and sure, in a moment to have the foundations destroyed and to be exposed in all one's wretched nakedness and falsity?

A rogue who had been leading a double life of infamy said, when unmasked in court recently, "There remains nothing now for me but the ball of a pistol or the quick, deadly dose of poison."

Pierre was too cowardly to commit suicide; he had just religion enough to make him afraid to die. When the Count of Perigord close by yelled out, "Down, you dog. Get to the dungeon, you thief! Come to your well-earned deserts, you rascal!" it was only second nature for Pierre to turn his back on his lady and the two men, and with spurs ground into his horse's side to fly as fast as the best horse in all Perigord could take him. The two counts started in pursuit after sounding an alarm, so that everybody now was after him. But his good horse distanced for a time the pursuers. He did not dare start in the direction of his father's; he did not dare enter any walled town, as that would be only a cage for him; so he turned his horse toward the mountains. That evening, abandoning his horse, which was well-nigh exhausted, he sought shelter in a hollow tree. He was awakened the next morning by the baying of the hounds that were on his track; so he started for a stream and waded along its course for some time. His way had taken him near Ambazac, and he thought that he had made the dogs lose the scent, when he heard a noise and saw his would-be father-in-law only a few hundred yards behind. He turned and, quickly crossing the ravine, ran into the bushes, where no horse could follow him.

But the old noble was eager for his prey and, dismounting from his horse, led the chase on foot. He

was handicapped with more weight than Pierre, but was fresher. Now the only hope for the wretch was to find an asylum. In the distance was the monastery of Etienne. If he could only reach that place before his pursuers, he would be safe from physical injury, and thither he ran with all the force that he could summon. Every unnecessary article of clothing was left behind on the way, and with the thundering step of the avenger in close proximity he rushed panting into the chapel where the monks were worshiping, and out of breath fell on his knees before the altar. Like a dog that has chased a hare a long way, and when he is just about to close his jaws upon the beast sees it dodge under a large rock in a hole which he cannot enter, so Rochechouart felt when he saw Pierre enter the monastery. He knew that the prey was safely holed, and to wait for him to come out would make the count more weary than the culprit ; so the only thing left was to stand at the door and swear, just as a dog barks before the hole the hare has entered.

Hugues came out to try to pacify the enraged man, but it was of no use. Nothing would satisfy him but the body of Pierre, and the atmosphere of the monastery had not been so polluted with blasphemy since its erection as now. Hugues, seeing his inability to quiet the man, took him around to Etienne's cell, and when the monk came, his simple, earnest manner allayed the turbulent passions, and he urged the man to rest awhile and breathe the air of peace.

Etienne's words soon soothed the raging count, and he rested until the supper hour ; then he was invited to partake of the frugal repast of bean soup. What was his surprise and horror to find that Pierre was there too ! To go over and give that rogue a box on the ears was the work of a moment, and more would have hap-

pened had not Hugues, who was greatly annoyed that such a scene should have taken place before his beloved Etienne, rushed up and from behind seized the belligerent count and, lifting him clear from the floor, held him as in a vise, while his brother monks led Pierre out of the monastery dining room.

Etienne rebuked the count very sharply for his conduct, and made him swear that he would never in the future use violence toward Pierre before he would grant the desired forgiveness.

The count took his leave after this as soon as he could, and returned to his castle. He found his poor daughter Marie in great distress. She knew but little of the world. How could she, poor child, as from her infancy she had never passed a night from under her father's roof? The father had a great deal of fine feeling about him under all that rough exterior. He called his weeping child to him, and in the very tenderest way showed her how narrowly she had escaped being the victim of the rascally Pierre.

A messenger was at once dispatched to Dorat to tell the parents of the disgraceful son about his return and what had happened. The Lord of Dorat was so thoroughly shocked at what had occurred that he at once set out for Grandmont, bent on learning all that was possible. The meeting between the father and son was not very comforting. The wretched vagabond had to confess his guilt and meet the anger of his parent. Pierre promised that he would leave immediately for the Holy Land, and only under such conditions did his father forgive him.

The next morning the poor fellow, dilapidated and crestfallen, went out with a passing throng that was going to take the cross. The experience of the past, together with some good advice from Etienne and

Hugues, made the profligate sober and steady for a while; but after he had been out for a time and was sufficiently far from the country not to be known, he plunged into excesses more wildly than ever, and soon fell a victim to his own evil propensities and died of a wretched disease.

Poor little Marie drooped like a frozen lily after this adventure. She was glad that she had been saved from such disgrace, but her heart had been unreservedly given to that unworthy man. Her appetite went away entirely, the bloom faded from her cheek, the company of the gay and festive had no longer any attractions for her. When the scarred warriors repeated their tales of conflict in the great hall of the castle, she would quietly steal away to her own room; when the music of the troubadour sounded the ditties which made others laugh, tears came to her eyes; and when parties went out for the chase or engaged in any of the sports of the age, she always found some excuse for not making one of them. She begged the consent of her parents to retire into a convent. This was given, and when the doors closed behind her she shut out the world so completely that even her friends never saw her afterward. But O, the end was not yet! Those ceaseless vigils, that long unrest, that little broken heart drove the beauty from her cheeks and the brilliancy from her eyes, and brought ashes where once beauty had been enthroned. Soon a hacking cough, followed by a bright hectic spot on each cheek, appeared, but still she relented not a single vigil. Her sister nuns could laugh; she wept. They might eat; she only coughed. They sang praises; she sang requiems. They slept; she prayed and suffered. No one could ever get from her a single word of complaint. She saw with great contentment that she was going, and early one cold morning, when the matin bells summoned to early prayer, for the first time since she had entered

the convent she was missed. The unusual absence caused an inquiry. As the door to the little cell that shut her out from the world was opened, a figure kneeling at the foot of a crucifix was revealed. Her head had fallen down upon the cold stone, her hands still grasped the beads that for unnumbered times she had counted, and that broken heart, that was so lively and full of hope before the dark shadow of Pierre cast its gloom of blight upon her, was now still forever. The poor crushed flower had fallen to the earth, and she had left the world forever.

CHAPTER XXIV.

PRIVATE WAR.

THE terrible plague that was devastating Limoges, and for which the people near Ambazac had found a remedy in the waters that flowed from beneath a mysterious mound—this scourge that had struck terror and sorrow into the hearts of the inhabitants of that vicinity—was still continuing its ghastly work. The abandoned dead, the sick and the dying, the universal fear—all helped to spread the disease. The fields were left untilled, the crops ungathered, and it seemed as if the angel of death was about to claim the entire population of this section of France.

Oftentimes this disease stopped almost as suddenly as it began. Some natural cause—some change in the temperature, a frost, or a fall of snow or rain—swept the poison away; or, like a fire that burns until it can find no more fuel and then dies out, so this disease began to disappear. The glory of its disappearance, however, is claimed by the Church for the relics of St. Martial. His body was exhumed in the presence of a vast crowd, and his bones were carried to Mont Jovis, where in early times stood a temple to Jupiter. They were then taken back again to the church and exposed. The faith of the people made them believe that sweet odors proceeded from the coffin, and that virtue at once was felt to stay the power of the disease, which soon after disappeared.

But now a worse trouble than the plague attacked Limoges, which was divided into two sections, one called the castle and the other the city. The latter, with the

cathedral as its center, was governed by the bishop, while the former was under the control of the vicomte. Between these two powers, the civil and the ecclesiastical, there was a constant strife; and that little narrow, winding street, called to-day the Faubourg de la Boucherie ("Street of the Butchery"), has been the scene of many a bloody conflict, but perhaps never more frequently than during the years of 1103 and 1105.

It seems hardly possible now that there could have been such disastrous civil conflicts as took place in the dark ages. The great cause of the strife was then, as now, the greed of gain. It seems that certain lands had been given by ecclesiastical authority to the bishop and monastery of St. Martial. The Vicomte de Limoges naturally did not admit that these lands were lawfully withheld from his suzerainty, and the result was a clash of arms. In the matter of arms the bishop was about as well equipped as the vicomte. The monastery and his palace were well fortified, a deep moat surrounded his grounds, and heavy battlements defended it. Besides, he had an armed force to do his will and to resist any interference. Two armed forces, under two naturally rival powers, could not help coming to blows.

It happened that in the month of July, 1103, the fruits of some of the disputed lands were brought to the castle of the vicomte—flocks of sheep, some very fine cattle, grain, and vegetables. The good monks stirred up the jealousy of the bishop, who sent out an armed force to take the animals and the vegetables. The poor farmers and serfs ran screaming like so many whipped dogs, and while the representatives of the Church militant drove off the cattle, the farmers, fearing the displeasure of the vicomte, rushed up to the castle and poured out their woes into ears that were only too ready to hear any evil against the bishop. The cattle were

specially wanted to meet a requisition made by the king, and the loss was too considerable to overlook. The vicomte was not a man to rage in quiet very long. He ordered the clarion to be sounded immediately and all the troops of the castle to be put under arms. The ringing of the alarm was heard just on the other side of the moat by the bishop, who ordered like preparations, though he did not make the noise about calling his troops together that the vicomte did. Perhaps he was already prepared and expected the result, and thought that the absence of a number of soldiers from the castle would give him a good opportunity to force the written consent from the vicomte. But, like many others who provoke a war, the mistake was found out when it was too late.

Unknown to the bishop, a large contingent of troops had arrived at the castle the night before, and the vicomte was in a most excellent condition to fight. When thoroughly aroused he was a good general, and the ecclesiastic was no match for him. As a rule the conflicts took place where the two territories joined, and the beaten party retreated to the fortress to which he belonged ; but on this occasion, while the troops of the bishop were receiving the benediction and listening to a harangue, the vicomte had divided his forces into two parts, which were to leave the castle by two ways. A small force was to march to the entrance of the bishop's grounds and demand a surrender of the goods that were taken and also a penalty for the outrage. This demand, it was known, would be refused, and an appeal to arms would surely follow. According to custom the bishop would then send out his army, and the two would fight the matter out. As the force of the bishop was superior to the attacking party, orders were given by the vicomte to retreat after the first skirmish

up the Vienne, but to retire slowly and fighting, so as to draw the bishop's forces from the cathedral. After the pursuers had been withdrawn a sufficient distance, the second relay was to sweep down on the cathedral and, if possible, take it by storm. The vicomte himself was the leader of this detachment.

The tactics of the wily lord of the castle were successful at every point. The bishop fell into the snare. As he came forth beyond the cathedral to encourage his troops, thinking that he had them now under his own power, and in his own mind was planning terms by which the lands in question should forever revert to the bishopric, he was surprised by a loud cry coming from the cathedral, and, looking up, saw that he was cut off from his fortress by his enemy, who was charging down upon him with the speed of a man who is leading his forces to assured victory. The few attendants of the bishop fled in every direction, and as the churchman fell on his knees to pray heaven for help he was immediately surrounded by the enemy, who led him a prisoner to the castle, a place which he had said he would never visit. Having secured this prize, the vicomte rushed toward the cathedral. The attendants, who were expecting the bishop, had not shut the gates. The victorious forces entered, and in a few moments the treasures of the cathedral were in the hands of the plunderer. Very little blood had been shed, but a decisive victory had been won.

The bells were rung for a cessation of the combat, and the victor rode out of the gates of the church fortress with many times the value of the cattle and goods taken by the guard of the bishop in the morning. What a surprise awaited the pursuing soldiers, who thought they had gained the victory! They found not only that the cathedral had been plundered and the bishop was a

prisoner, but when they entered the cathedral ground a strong guard was set to prevent their escape, so that the news of the battle could not be carried to other quarters by the friends of the bishop until the papers were signed.

The poor Bishop of Limoges was thoroughly humiliated. When summoned into the vicomte's presence, after the return of that warrior, he was a very sorry spectacle. He said to the master of the situation : " I am in your power. Do unto me what pleases you. But know that God will hold you to account for the way in which you treat his ministers." " Yes, my lord," answered the haughty visitor, " and the same God will hold you to an account for the depredations and thefts which you have committed through your vassals. Now is a good time to square accounts." After a long parley and absolute refusals on both sides, considerable concession was made on the part of the bishop, who signed a release and paid a large price for his misdoings. The ecclesiastic was escorted by the castle guards to the cathedral, which once more received its master, the guards were removed, and for a time peace and quietude reigned between these two rival powers.

Several weeks after this the bishop " to show his good will," as he declared, invited his successful brother of the castle to a banquet. As the invitation was accompanied by a request that the vicomte should leave his soldiers at the castle, it was not accepted, for, as the representative of temporal power said, " Does this old fox expect me to put my head deliberately into the lion's jaws with no more return than a dinner ? " But to refuse an invitation was tantamount to a declaration of war, and, as nothing was to be gained by a further conflict, the vicomte sent back this word :

“TO HIS HOLINESS THE BISHOP OF LIMOGES, GREETING : The last time I had the pleasure of entertaining your reverence was after a manner that I think needs no return of the same civility. However, if it is really your wish to cement as lasting the peace which now exists between the cathedral and the castle, let us meet on that common ground between our respective fortresses, and there under temporary booths eat and drink to our future peace and prosperity. I myself will be responsible for the erection of the booths and for the behavior of my soldiers.

“I am, my dear bishop, your most obedient servant,
“VICOMTE DE LIMOGES.”

As this invitation was delivered in such a manner, the bishop could not decline, and his plan of returning the compliment of imprisonment was upset by the shrewd nobleman. The feast was held, and for years afterward peace was kept between the two respective powers.

CHAPTER XXV.

DUKE FULK THE BLACK.

THERE are few names that have created more dread, inspired more hope, or been recognized as more of a terror than that of Fulk Nerra, better known in France as Fulk the Black. This man came to the dukedom of Anjou at a time when it had sunk almost to a vassalage of the surrounding powerful realms of the Counts of Blois and Champagne. In order to understand a little of his character it is only necessary to recall some of his deeds. He seems to have been one of those pitiless, heartless wretches that were so numerous at that period. It is reported that when he was still a very young man he, for some reason, took umbrage at his wife. Instead of giving her a beating, as was the custom eight hundred years ago, he ordered her to her chamber and bade her dress in her finest robes, as if going to court. He then dressed himself in the same manner, and with a company of soldiers led her forth outside of his castle, where he ordered her bound to a stake, heaped a pile of combustibles around her, and, in spite of her cries and entreaties, had her burned alive, while he looked on and enjoyed the spectacle. In his eyes nothing was sacred, neither promises, pledges, right of sanctuary, nor Church. Whatever he desired he took, if he was powerful enough to get it, and it mattered not whether it was a friend or a foe that he attacked. A minister of the French king had advised the monarch to do many things against Fulk, and the monster, on hearing it, sent

twelve assassins to kill this man in the king's presence, threatening that if they failed in their mission he would have them instantly executed. This savage act they accomplished, to the terror of the king and of the whole court, and no name was feared more than that of Fulk. In his old age his own son revolted against his cruelties and oppressions and, gathering an army of the discontented, attempted his father's overthrow; but the old man rallied his forces and rushed upon the revolvers with so much energy that they were completely routed. He commanded them to saddle and bridle his son like a beast of burden and lead him thus into his presence. When Fulk saw him, he cried out, "Art thou conquered? Art thou conquered?"

Fulk possessed all the requisites for success in that barbarous age. He was endowed with personal courage to a wonderful degree, was able to organize and execute plans for assault and defense, and, like all tyrants, he was supremely jealous and unscrupulous in his transactions. As an example of his bravery, it is told that in one of his first battles there was a moment when all seemed lost. He was fighting with the Bretons on their own territory, where they had prepared a number of pitfalls into which an advancing army would certainly fall. At the right time the Bretons retreated, and, knowing where to go, passed in safety over the dangerous spot, but Fulk, rushing up with his horsemen, plunged into the pits. This was enough to destroy any ordinary force, but Fulk disentangled himself and almost single-handed dashed upon the foe with such vigor that he routed the entire army and gained the day. Long after this the Angevins, in their songs, likened this charge to "a stormy wind bending the thick corn rows."

It happened that his old friend, the Count of Le Mans, one who more than once had befriended him and

saved his life when in danger, was enticed into his castle and held captive until Fulk had robbed him of all his lands. There was no law in France that could reverse this except the sword, and the arms of Fulk were too well known for any knight to dare even to rebuke the wretch, who even at that epoch, when crime, rapine, murder, and theft were so common, was looked upon as a veritable personification of all that was evil and terrible. Herbert of Le Mans, destitute and robbed, turned his steps to the one solitary hope that was left, namely, the Church. Instead of appealing to the neighboring lords and barons, or asking the influence of the king in his behalf, he came to a source that was still stronger than these, though possessing no arms but prayers and no fortifications but the good character of the monks. Herbert came to Etienne and made known his griefs and sorrows, picturing out the wrongs he had innocently suffered, and revealing the terrible character of the Duke of Anjou. At the tale of such atrocities, villainies, and cruelties, and as the utter disregard for truth, virtue, honor, and religion was unfolded before the pure eyes of Etienne, his soul shrank in horror from this demon in human form.

"I know him," said Hugues, "and he must be converted."

"Would to God that it might be as you say," replied Etienne; "but, alas, we can do nothing but pray."

"Yes, we can," said Hugues; "we can do more than that."

"Pray tell me, my son, what can we do more? Can we send an army and take him? Can we force him, as Clovis did, at the point of the sword? Know you not that it would be easier to take the King of France than this son of the pit?"

"Leave that to me," calmly responded Hugues. "Fulk

and myself have fought on many a field. We know each other well, and I am sure there is the making of a good monk in him."

"God has greatly blessed you and made you to triumph over all your enemies so far, and perhaps he may make you the means now of overcoming this giant of evil, this Goliath of the Philistines. Whatever the Lord puts in your heart to do, that do, and may his blessings attend you!"

"I will only ask that you pray for me, and that you hold the monastery ready seven days hence to receive the Duke of Anjou," replied Hugues.

"I will do as you say," returned Etienne, his eyes now filling with tears as he thought of this brave disciple.

"I ask," said Hugues, "that Herbert of Le Mans remain here and meet his enemy face to face on my return."

"And do you really think that you will bring back that prince of evil?" said Herbert in amazement.

"I most certainly do," answered Hugues.

"Then I shall leave instantly, for no one's head is safe a moment when he is around," Herbert exclaimed.

"Fear not. The teeth of the lion will be drawn before he leaves here," said the intrepid Hugues.

Kneeling a few moments at the altar in silent prayer, then hastening to receive the benediction of the loved Etienne, Hugues sallied forth, with his old staff as his companion, to beard the "wild beast of the forest," as Fulk was called.

Many had been the missions on which Hugues had been sent. Some of them had been very delicate to consummate, but all had been successfully accomplished, and never as yet had he been defeated in his object. Sometimes he had been almost thwarted, as when the Benedictines at Solignac nearly crushed him under the

weight of their calumnies and duplicities ; but always, in some way or other, he escaped and came off triumphant. Never had he, however, attempted to bring into subjection so powerful a personage as the Duke of Anjou. The latter had heard of the former Lord of Chalus's conversion, and would often hold him up with sneers and jests before a company of vassals. Indeed, the duke had gone so far as to say that he would like to run across this "Sir Monk" and see how the life affected him, and if it were true that he loved his crucifix as he had his evil life. Before Hugues's conversion these two men, who had much in common, were often brought together, and, as each was perfectly fearless and a master on the battlefield, they respected one another's bravery and skill at arms ; and it happened that never had their encounters led them into personal antagonism, for their interests had never clashed. Now the monk was starting out single-handed to capture the most powerful lord in France. The result might well be doubtful ?

Could we have watched Hugues as he journeyed toward Tours we would have often seen him setting up his crucifix, repeating the service of the dead, snatches of the mass, and kneeling in prayer ; but steadily he kept his course toward Tours, where the dread lord resided. He reached the castle just before sunset, and the master had just finished his hearty dinner when Hugues was ushered into his presence. Monks and priests were not very frequent visitors to this castle, for the barbarous lord thought no more of mutilating them than he did of cutting off a chicken's head, and it was rare sport to make them commit some carnal or mortal sin and send them back with the record of their disgrace written on their backs. Anjou did not at first recognize Hugues de La-certa, and gruffly asked : "What has tempted thee, black

frock, to put thy head in the lion's jaws? Dost thou think I am become another imbecile like the Lord of Chalus that thou shouldst dare to enter here, where all this monkish flummery is hated? Dispatch thy business quickly and leave before the portcullis falls, or thou wilt regret the hour that brought thee hither."

Hugues, unterrified, walked up close to where the monster sat and said: "Be it known to thee that thy evil deeds, thy crimes and villainies, have been recounted in the ears of my master, Etienne of Grandmont, and he has sent me hither to call thee to confession and repentance. I bid thee be ready to depart with me at sunrise to-morrow, in order that thou mayst yet have time to prepare for heaven before it is too late and the devil has thee roasting like a pig on a spit in the unquenchable fires of perdition!"

"Saints and devils, hear this madman!" cried the lord, greatly amused at Hugues's audacity. "Never before has a black-frocked baldpate dared to address me as dost thou. Perhaps thou art not mortal. I will test thy divinity." And he raised his club to strike Hugues over the head, but the latter's gnarled staff caught the descending blow and hurled the club across the floor, greatly to the amazement of the duke, who said: "Ah, well! Though you wear a frock, you are no woman. Come and dine, and then we will talk about this matter, and I will go to Grandmont or thou shalt go to the gallows."

Hugues replied, "I will accept thy hospitality, for the walk has worn me." So, sitting down, he partook heartily of the good cheer that was provided, the duke the while looking on in amazement at this creature clothed in a monk's garb.

After dinner the duke ordered two swords to be brought, and, giving one to Hugues, said: "Now de-

fend thyself. If thou be a messenger from Etienne and sent to take me, I will go if thou wilt overcome me in battle ; but if thou art overcome, remember that I will hang thee on the walls until thy carcass falls to the ground." "As thou wilt," replied Hugues. "Only bring in witnesses to hear the contract and take down our pledges."

The duke, who only expected to have some fun and to show to the court his superior swordsmanship, was ready to sign any contract, for he felt so sure of the victory that it seemed to him that to pledge his dukedom would be no risk. The articles were drawn up and signed by the duke. Hugues simply bared his arm and, opening his flesh, made the sign of the cross in his own blood and witnessed his own intrepidity. This made the old duke tremble ; he had never seen an act like that before. The two men were nearly the same age, both being past middle life. The duke, although always active in wars, had indulged in wine and good living, so that in a long combat he was apt to lose breath. Hugues, on the contrary, had been reduced to a mass of sinews and muscles. Of late he had exercised more than usual, having worked out of doors in improving the lands and buildings, so that he was hardy. The old skill that he had exhibited on the battlefield was by no means forgotten, and now, when so much was at stake, he was doubly armed. The duke would have withdrawn after he had seen Hugues open his arm and make the sign of the cross with his blood, but the honor and reputation of his house were at stake, and he could not flinch.

The great hall was cleared, lights suspended from above, and the burning logs in the huge fireplace threw out a flood of light. All the inmates of the castle were assembled to see the amusement, or, as the retainers

expressed it, to see how scientifically the duke could "carve this goose." Before he began, the duke called several of the younger vassals and bade them notice how he could cleave a skull at a blow and thrust the body through before it fell. Just as all was ready he ordered the servants to have water ready, as they were about to have a bad mess on the floor. When the signal was sounded, the duke cried, "Now come and be carved." Hugues meekly asked, "Let the rules of conflict be read." The request was granted, and he noted especially this passage: "If one should fall, or after making a thrust or slash lose his sword, or if the sword should be wrenched from the hand, the one who accomplished this should be counted to have the advantage, and would have the right to a blow at the prostrate man or be acknowledged victor, and whatever he claimed of the conquered should be granted." These conditions were greatly in Hugues's favor. He risked having his head cut open and his lifeless body hung to the castle wall, while the duke put himself at the mercy of Hugues's demand or of the fatal blow.

"No more dallying. I want to go to bed in fifteen minutes," shouted the blustering lord. "Come, monk, stand up!"

Hugues was standing all the time, and was only awaiting the signal to begin. This was now given, and the count made a tremendous dash at Hugues with a crushing blow that would have been enough to fell an ox; but, agile as a doe, Hugues sprang aside, turning so as to catch his enemy's sword and give it a glancing stroke, which changed its course so that it made a deep gash in the duke's thigh and broke its own point on the stones. The duke himself fell heavily to the pavement, and most of the vassals thought he was killed. It was a serious shock and rendered the lord of

the castle half insensible. Hugues, instead of taking the advantage that his opponent's disability and the conditions gave him, was at Anjou's side in a moment, and helped stanch the blood that was pouring from the wounded flesh. The spectators looked on in amazement, and began to whisper: "It is a saint, it is a saint. No fiend would try to help a wounded adversary." In fact, they all crowded around, but at a respectable distance, admiring the way that the wounded limb was cared for. When the old duke came to himself and saw the calm, anxious face of Hugues, he cried out: "It is Hugues de Lacerta. I have heard that thou wert a saint and now I believe it. I will follow thee and do thy will." The duke was cared for, and Hugues was lodged in the best chamber of the castle. The gash was not very serious, as the force of the blow was spent on the ground.

Early the next morning all were aroused, and, in spite of protestations from the inmates of the castle and the counsel of Hugues, the duke would straightway go forth to make the pilgrimage to Grandmont. Hugues thought the converting part would better be left to Etienne; so, beyond his services for the dead and other religious ceremonies which he performed so carefully, he was very reticent and said but little to the Duke of Anjou.

Early on the seventh day from the one on which Hugues had left Grandmont, Herbert of Le Mans was all excitement, and was heard to say: "It was a most foolhardy attempt. No man with his senses would have thought for a moment of going single-handed to bring hither that beast. In all probability Hugues is now dangling from one of the parapets of the castle. I shall never forgive myself for permitting him to go." These words did not comfort Etienne very much, but he endeavored to continue praying in faith, and comforted himself with the thought

that Hugues would return all right, even if he did not bring the terrible duke with him. The chapel service was finished, and the monks had been urged with more than usual vehemence to pray for Hugues, and all wore a sad, dejected look, when suddenly the little bell that hung over the portal was rung, and on opening the door in walked the duke, followed by the sturdy monk. The monks were in the act of leaving the chapel. Herbert of Le Mans had been with them and was in the procession, when, looking down the path to the gate, he saw his enemy and Hugues.

He uttered a cry of terror and would have fled and hidden himself had any way been opened. All that he could do was to run trembling to a cell and hide away as best he might. Etienne nearly always received his guests in the chapel, and there he remained to hear what Hugues and the duke had to report. The former, advancing, knelt to receive the benediction of his master, and then said, "I have the great pleasure of introducing the Duke of Anjou, who comes to make his confession and seek repentance at this holy place." "It is well, and blessed be heaven that has inclined his heart," said Etienne, greatly moved at what he considered the miraculous success of his follower. The abbot then ordered the bell to be rung for a new service, which was performed at once, all joining in with great fervor. Hugues was seen in health and soundness in his accustomed place, and Herbert of Mans took a seat as far as possible from where the belligerent duke was sitting.

Many years had passed since the man of war had been at a similar service. He did not know what to do or how to act. He sat like an amazed child, never closing his eyes or bending his knees, but by the look on his face it was easy to see that he was deeply impressed.

After the service was finished, Etienne asked the duke

if he wished to confess and repent. He answered, "Never in my life have I met a man, if he is a man, who is able to use a sword as handily as this servant of thine; and if confession and repentance will make me as supple as he, then I want to confess and repent."

"I fear," replied Etienne, "that thou dost not understand what we mean. We speak not of carnal things here. But come, my brother, I will explain to thee in private."

Then, all the monks having been dismissed except Hugues (who for prudential reasons was invited to remain), the following conversation took place:

"I have heard that thou hast been a man of sin, one who has been the terror not only of the temporal power, but of the Church. Thy crimes and thy evil deeds have made thee famous as a sinner. Tell me now, art thou ready to confess thy sins, repent of thy evil ways, and henceforth lead a good and proper life?"

"I am willing to do anything," replied the duke, "that will make me so handy with the sword that I can defend my head from my enemy's club and make his sword cut himself instead of me."

"What!" asked Etienne with surprise; "wouldst thou come to this place of peace and prayer to learn the cruel arts of war?"

"I know," answered the duke, "that thou hast sent a man to my castle that single-handed has given me the worst overthrow I have ever had in my life, and I should like to know the art that thou hast of teaching these tricks, for I have several dangerous engagements on hand that will require all of my skill."

"Let us wait three days," said Etienne; "then let us meet together after fasting and praying, and we will hold further converse and judge what would best be done. In the meanwhile I will ask Hugues to escort thee to thy

cell. And I bid thee pray with all thy heart, fast, and attend the services; then, perhaps, thou wilt see more clearly and understand the meaning of repentance and confession, and thy poor soul may be fitted for heaven at last."

Hugues showed the duke to a cell, and, being very wearied with his walk, he stretched himself on the hard stone floor and was soon asleep. Long and loud was that slumber.

Hugues went to Etienne and repeated all that had taken place since his departure, to the great astonishment of his master, who asked: "And didst thou risk thy life to bring him here? Thou art another David, only thou hast not slain him. Heaven be praised for saving thee and bringing him here. But what shall we do now that we have him?"

"Do?" replied Hugues. "Make him feel that the devil is sure of him, that his fiends are building fires to roast him because of his sins, and let all of the monks groan and cry when mention is made of it."

That Hugues understood the man with whom he had to deal there is no doubt. The duke was but a brute, and could not be touched except by that which would appeal to his brutal nature. During the three days it was therefore designed that the terrors should be preached.

When the bell sounded for worship, the old duke was still sleeping, and the one whose duty it was to go to every cell and see that the occupant was up and out for chapel entered the cell and called to the sleeper, who did not stir. Then, going to his side, he gently shook him, saying, "It is time for prayers; arouse."

"I'll teach thee to disturb my sleep," cried the angry warrior, giving the monk a blow with his open hand that sent the ecclesiastic sprawling out of the door.

Just then Hugues, passing by, asked the cause of the disturbance.

"Nothing," said the monk; "except he cracked my skull when I awoke him."

Hugues went in and bade the duke come to prayers, which he proceeded to do without much ceremony. The sermon was, as Hugues suggested, on "The Agony of the Lost," and the fervid imagination of the monk drew such ghastly pictures that even Dante himself might pause in envy. The duke sat in wonder; the monks screamed and crossed themselves; the tears rolled down Etienne's face.

The old duke grew uneasy. What he had heard was enough to make him very much dissatisfied with himself. He was not in good condition. The scant bowl of thin soup that was served at the slender meal had not satisfied him. He wanted company and diversion, but in his cell he could not find it. His mind began the long-unused occupation of reflection. He thought of the past. Sleep now forsook his eyelids. Unpleasant thoughts and suggestions from the sermon he had just listened to would come before him, and he thought he saw phantoms. So he continued until midnight, and then he saw that weird procession go forth to walk thrice around the cemetery.

Hugues suggested that all the monks at the close should ask aloud the question, "Am I prepared for heaven or hell?" These solemn words awoke a terrible feeling in the wretched old duke. He began to recall the good deeds of his past life. At first he thought there was quite a number, but when after the next sermon he heard what good deeds were, and how little it took to spoil goodness, on reexamination he found himself shut out.

Indeed, he began to feel that he was a sinner; and when the third sermon was preached on "The Devil's Way

with Sinners," he began to melt down, and cried out with the rest of the monks. The feeling became contagious, and in a little while there was a regular *vale* of Bochim. The loudest weeper was the black duke.

He was now ready to go to Etienne and confess. He poured out all the evil deeds that he could remember. Etienne gave as his penance a pilgrimage to the Holy Land and the restoration of what he had stolen. Herbert of Le Mans was called in, and the duke on his knees asked his pardon and promised on his return to restore all. Etienne wanted him then and there to make restitution, but the old duke promised he would on his return, and, receiving conditional forgiveness, he at once started out for the Holy Land.

He was successful in reaching Jerusalem, and there sought martyrdom by crying out, "I am a Christian." He even hired a man to scourge his naked back while he went crying through the streets of the city. He remained there for some little time, engaging in all kinds of enterprises, visiting all the sacred places, but he returned finally to his castle worse than before. He felt that he had obtained indulgence for future sins and forgiveness for past offenses. In fact, words made no impression, for he would answer every appeal with the argument, "I have been to the holy sepulcher and have received the indulgence of the pope."

Only one thing was noticeable after this, that he had a higher respect for the monks, and spoke of Hugues until his dying day as a perfect master of the sword.

This was the experience of a great many who went to the Holy Land, as they were filled with self-pride and self-sufficiency, and thought that, as they had satisfied the laws of heaven, no act of theirs could change their title to future glory.

In after times this monastery became the great resort

of men who were at war. The hostile Dukes of Berri and of Burgundy met here, and after fasting for three days in separate cells were brought together. Holy communion was refused them until they would grasp each other's hands and swear friendship. After this fast, and with no prospect of getting out under any other conditions, and in the environment of monks, prayers, masses, and chants, the fight was generally all taken out of the most quarrelsome and the way to reconciliation was paved.

The work performed on the Duke of Anjou made Grandmont famous, and all who were injured came here with their woes, and its influence was extended over the whole of what is now known as France, and even into Belgium and some parts of Germany. This work was extremely wearing. Grandmont was under the pope directly, and for this reason was considered neutral, and it became the great arbitrating power of central Europe, the weaker party especially seeking its protecting power.

CHAPTER XXVI.

CONCLUSION.

THE lonely little cell which Etienne with his own hands had formed out of the rocks nearly fifty years before was now the center of a large group of similar caves, in which men shrinking from the world sought to find peace and preparation for the world to come. There was no order or beauty about the construction of these rough abodes ; indeed, there was no common roof to shield them from the storms and fury of the elements. There was a rude chapel where the monks met, often as many as seven times a day, and in which some spent most of their time, and there was a hall or refectory where the simple, frugal meals were served. The brethren took turns in serving, as well as in cooking ; but the dishes were not greatly varied, and the *cuisine* was not difficult to manage.

The austerity, the benevolence, and the good reputation of the monks of Grandmont spread, far and wide, and the humble shrine became one of the greatest attractions of central Europe. That great movement which was to bring powerful princes, ruling sovereigns, and victorious warriors to this seat of purity and peace, as it was known, was just beginning. Years after this the Princess Matilda enriched the monastery with a lavish outpouring of wealth. Henry the Second, while being tossed on the Channel in a storm, encouraged the captain and the sailors by saying, "Fear not ! The good men of Grandmont are praying for us !" And the ship was brought in safety through the peril.

The jealousy which had been aroused in the early part of the history of this establishment grew worse instead of better. The Benedictines and the neighboring clergy, whose lives were so very different from those of the followers of Etienne, looked with no favor on their growing prosperity. The meanest kind of persecution followed, and every sort of pernicious action was indulged in that might injure these monks. The hardest thing that evil has to battle with is truth. Light may be hidden for a while, but it is sure to come out at last, and the contrast is strong against the evil. Nothing is more prejudicial to the wicked designer than to be shown up in his wickedness, and it happened that in the attempt to crush Hugues the reaction against the Benedictines was something terrible, and had it not been for the kindness and forgiveness of Etienne and Hugues it is probable that they would have been driven from the country.

But a great and terrible loss was in store for the little band. The winter of 1124 had set in with unusual vigor. Etienne, now in his eightieth year, was feeble and sickly. How he had lived so long was a mystery, and some of the monks thought it was by miraculous help. But the tottering form still continued on the round of duties, which had become a second life. Seldom now would his voice be heard beyond a mere ejaculatory sentence urging the brothers to forgiveness and love. Among the most watchful and mindful of all was Hugues. He was his constant companion, and could hardly be urged to leave his master's side. Etienne, as he grew older, became more and more childlike. His faith was implicit, his love wide as humanity, and as for revenge and the harder feelings that possess the heart, he had driven them all away. It was like the sun, which has been clouded during the day with mist and

storm, shining out with undimmed radiance at its setting. There was nothing to mar the closing scenes of this life, which had had so much influence on the age in which he lived. No one had failed to notice how the hands had become more and more palsied, how the form stooped nearer to the ground, as if to welcome its coming resting place, but no one dared to think of the end.

It was a most memorable morning that eighth of February, and is one graven on the annals of Grandmont. The monks were assembled for the morning mass, which took place at sunrise. Etienne, supported by the strong arm of Hugues, was almost carried to the place he usually occupied. The service was repeated as usual, and all the brethren were in attendance. At the close of the service it was customary for Etienne to pronounce the benediction. The ceremony was not as is usual to-day in Romish churches. Etienne and all the monks knelt, remaining with bowed heads for some minutes; then the sacred formula would be repeated. Now all sank to their knees, every head was bowed, a silence as of the tomb prevailed, and only the breathing of the monks was heard. Seconds passed, the silence continued; minutes went by, not one word. The intensity of the expectation became so great that some of the monks glanced up. They saw the upturned face of their master, his hands raised, and a smile on his face. They still waited, some thinking that he had seen a vision, others that he was in a trance. None dared to speak or move; but still they waited.

All eyes were now open, all were gazing at Etienne, but preserving a silence in which fear, hope, anxiety, admiration, and wonder alike played an important part. Hugues, who was always close to his beloved master, now arose softly and approached his side. The eyes

were open, but fixed ; the hands uplifted, but cold ; the face was turned heavenward, but the brow was icy. It was enough. The truth came like a flash on his mind—Etienne was dead. He knelt by the side of the still kneeling form and breathed out the benediction, adding a prayer of his own. Then, rising to his feet, he quickly began a “Te Deum,” in which all of the monks joined ; but tears and sobs choked the utterance and made the music more like a funeral knell. Hugues, standing in his place, spoke of the glorious victory, the rapturous bliss, and the glory of the departed in such a way as to make all the rest feel that they would like to go immediately with their former head to the skies.

The news soon spread, and multitudes hurried over to the chapel to see the dead saint kneeling still. It was the determination to leave the body in that position as long as possible. The effect on the beholders was very marked, and although the Benedictines said, “It is a trick,” the people in general looked upon Etienne as a saint and believed that his body was able to work miracles.

The directions given by Etienne before his death about his funeral were extremely simple. He would allow no eulogy ; he wished to have the service of the Church repeated over him, and to be carried three times around the cemetery, while his brethren repeated the words, “This is the end of all the living.” He selected the spot where he wished to be laid, which was close to the walk that was daily taken. Never before had the little town of Ambazac been so crowded. The highest dignitaries of Church and State that could attend by reason of their proximity were there. Great gifts were brought to adorn his monastery, for he had declared that his tomb must be left unadorned ; and as the simple, quiet, unobtrusive, but influential life of the monks was

realized, it was the cause of great wonder and admiration, being in such striking contrast to the pomp and show of other orders.

The death of Etienne made a great change in the affairs of Grandmont. By the unanimous wish of the order Hugues was requested to become the abbot, but it was with great reluctance and hesitation that he finally consented to follow the wishes of the monks. It was not long after this that, in order to obtain more perfect security and absolute seclusion, the whole order moved up the mountains to that wild, deserted place where for six centuries their building stood as an asylum for the oppressed, a monument of peace and good will. Hugues sought to follow the example of Etienne. In order to keep the monks from any connection with the world, there was introduced into the brotherhood a second order of men, who, not being ecclesiastics, were exempt from many of the religious duties and obligations. They occupied themselves with works, cultivated the ground, built bridges, laid out roads. Their work was most excellent, and as the traveler of to-day rides over the highways of central France, oftentimes his attention is called to bridges which have withstood the wear and tear of centuries, whose graceful arches have borne the burdens of hundreds of years past, and which will probably resist as many centuries of future wear. These workers were called by the inhabitants, "The good men of Grandmont." Hugues gave these directions: "Whatever you do, do it as if the eyes of God were upon you. If a bridge that you make is poorly built and a man breaks through and loses his life, you are guilty of his death. If the road that you make is poor and men blaspheme as they go over it, the blasphemy is at your door, for you were the tempters. The eyes of God see both sides, and if there is any poor spot he knows it. Do,

therefore, all to meet his approval." Is it any wonder that under such injunctions roads, bridges, and buildings rose which have been the admiration of ages ?

We will not follow further the history of Grandmont. Enough has been written to show the holiness and earnestness of these Christians, whose lovely, holy lives shine out so brightly in the dark ages. Hugues in his humble cell, beloved by all, followed to a peaceful end the life he devoted to Etienne and his monastery. After the heat and cold, the storms and calm, the days and nights of eight centuries that have swept their weary length along ; after the discovery of continents, the peopling of new worlds, the various changes that have followed the rapid progress of civilization, science, and knowledge, we now take our stand on the ruins of the monastery that was once the pride of central France. Bickerings, strife, jealousies, and dissensions finally broke up the order founded by Etienne. The costly gifts of kings have been divided among the various ecclesiastical institutions, or have fallen the prey of unholy greed, and a solitary chapel with a heap of ruins only remains as a tombstone of what once was. The massive masonry and well-built walls, every stone of which was laid in prayer, have been mostly dismantled. A man who had the contract to build the courthouse at Limoges bought the old buildings for the hewn stone. As he proceeded in the work of destruction and saw the fine masonry, how well the work was done, how conscientiously and true the building was built, tears are said to have filled his eyes, and he said, "Alas, no one builds this way now." It will be but a little time ere the ivy, moss, and rubbish will hide forever the spot once so revered. The bones of Etienne are scattered. Hugues was also considered and honored as a saint, but the active, practical age in which we live is hurrying all into the darkness of

oblivion. The very spot that had such an influence will be lost. The names of the men who gave a tone to their age and whose characters stand out like a mid-night sun will be forgotten, and with them the debt of obligation which we owe to those who in the midst of error held fast to truth as they knew it, who in the tumultuous and contending currents of passion, avarice, selfishness, cruelty, and superstition maintained a high standard of charity and virtue, which kept the age from utter barbarism and opened the way for the triumphal march of the centuries of progress toward the grand attainments of the dawn of the twentieth century.

THE END.



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